



NAVY ARMS 1873:
A CLASSIC IS BACK, BETTER THAN EVER

EVOLUTION OF THE HOLSTER

GUNSLINGERS

FIREARMS OF THE OLD WEST

THE
.32-20:
A LITTLE CARTRIDGE
WITH A BIG
ATTITUDE

SADDLES & SIX-GUNS

TOP GUNS IN THE
WILD WEST

NEW LIFE FOR OLD GUNS
TURNBULL RESTORATIONS

THE REALITY OF THE
OLD WEST COWBOY

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO
CAP AND BALL REVOLVERS

TOP-BREAK
REVOLVERS
LEADING
CHOICES AS
BACK-UPS

AMERICAN
DERRINGER'S
PALM-SIZED
POWERHOUSES

THE GUN OF THE
TEXAS RANGERS

FROM THE EDITORS OF WORLD OF FIREPOWER
GUNSLINGERS WINTER/SPRING 2016
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Illusive & Wild

This image of a modern-day cowboy out to rope wild horses is perhaps symbolic of our own yearnings to somehow capture and hold on to something illusive, free and yet just out of reach.





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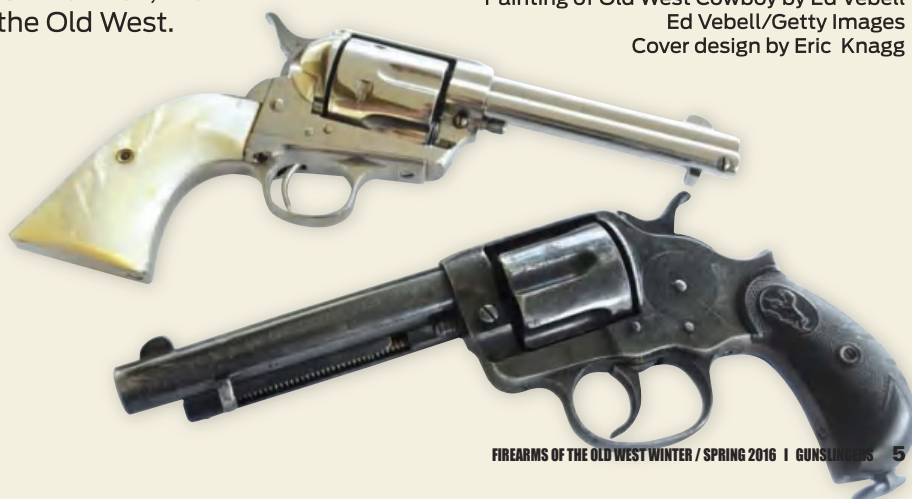


ON THE COVER:

Painting of Old West Cowboy by Ed Vebell

Ed Vebell/Getty Images

Cover design by Eric Knagg



Editorial

It Should Still Be Fun

Throughout my early childhood, I was convinced I was going to be a cowboy. It didn't matter to me that I was born in the East and at that point had never even seen a horse, much less ridden one.

It made sense. I was the son of movie generation parents and became a TV generation child during a time when a fairly large percentage of shows being aired were Westerns. Lots of boys my age wanted to be cowboys.

Incidentally, when I thought about this, I started naming off as many TV Westerns as I could remember in five minutes. There must have been dozens. I got stuck at about 23. You try it. I'll wait here. I ran to the computer and found many more, including about a dozen that I had watched many times but couldn't name when it counted. Actually, it didn't count for anything, but I feel I should have done better.

I didn't just watch television. I spent plenty of time outdoors. I envied my older brother, who had a BB gun. The best I could do was to obtain a slingshot from the black market of goods secreted in the far reaches of my brother's closet. A slingshot had a tactical advantage in that it was more concealable, at least from my mother, I thought. It turned out she had X-ray vision for those things.

Eventually my career path led me into law enforcement. It was as close to my childhood dream as I would come. I wasn't a cowboy, but I got to wear the Stetson,

put on the gun belt and ride real fast, although it was in a police cruiser instead of on a horse.


These days, I spend some time writing gun articles for "tactical" magazines. It's pretty serious stuff. But one reason I keep coming back to my interest in the Old West is that it's also fun.

"...it might surprise some younger shooters...that the 'fun' Old West firearms can be plenty serious...in 'tactical' situations even today."

Don't get me wrong. I have plenty of fun shooting "serious" modern weapons. And it might surprise some younger shooters to know that the "fun" Old West firearms can be plenty serious if you were to use them in "tactical" situations even today. But there was elegance and art with many Old West guns, and that is lacking in today's modern designs.

I guess my point is that it's not a matter of needing to grow up and start acting as an adult. As an adult, you should still find joy in the simple, sometimes fanciful things. It should be as easy as it was when you were a kid. The Old West could be a serious place. For me, the Old West is revisiting a place of childhood adventure, and I can go there whenever I pick up a lever action rifle or single action revolver.

Steven Paul Barlow, Editor



GUNSLINGERS

FIREARMS OF THE OLD WEST

EDITORIAL

Doug Jeffrey Editorial Director
Steven Paul Barlow Editor
Wendy Wilson Managing Editor
Henry Z. De Kuyper Senior Staff Photographer

DESIGN

Eric Mendoza Art Director
Eric Knagg Design Director

CONTRIBUTORS

Bob Campbell, Jerry Catania, Jim Dickson, Abe Elias,
Katie Ferraro, John McQuaid, Mike Searson

ADVERTISING

Gabe Frimmel Ad Sales Director
(714) 200-1930
gfrimmel@engagedmediainc.com
Casey Clifford Senior Account Executive
(714) 200-1982
Mark Pack Senior Account Executive
(714) 200-1939
John Cabral Advertising Design
Gennifer Merriday Advertising Traffic Coordinator
Eric Gomez Advertising Traffic Coordinator

DIRECT MARKETING GROUP

John Bartulin (866) 866-5146 ext. 2746
Neil Medalla (866) 866-5146 ext. 2780

OPERATIONS

Subroto Mallick Business Analytic Manager
Robert Short IT Manager
Harsh Srivastava Newsstand and Circulation Analyst
Shailesh Khandelwal Subscriptions Manager
Alex Mendoza Administrative Assistant
Jeno Torres Administrative Assistant
Victoria Castle Intern Program Manager
Arvind Sidhu Prepress Manager

EDITORIAL, PRODUCTION & SALES OFFICE

22840 Savi Ranch Parkway, Ste. 200, Yorba Linda, CA 92887
(714) 939-9991 • Fax: (800) 249-7761
www.engagedmediamags.com
www.facebook.com/eembybeckett

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(800) 764-6278
(239) 653-0225 Foreign Inquiries
subscriptions@engagedmediainc.com
customerservice@engagedmediainc.com
Back Issues: www.engagedmediamags.com

Books, Merchandise, Reprints
(800) 764-6278 • Foreign (239) 653-0225

Letters to Editor, New Products, or to Contribute a Story or Photo
djeffrey@engagedmediainc.com

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MEDIA, INC.

ENGAGED MEDIA INC.

Nick Singh President
Vikas Malhotra Vice President
Celia Merriday HR and Office Management
Gus Alonzo Circulation/Marketing Director
Jason Mulroney Director of Content
Pinaki Bhattacharya Vertical Manager

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Every Soldier has a story to tell.

The personal recollections of these ordinary men and women who have done extraordinary things for their fellow Soldiers, their Army, and their nation will soon be told at the National Museum of the United States Army.



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OLD WEST Elegance

**ANTIQUE, NEW DRY
GOODS FOR 19TH
CENTURY TIME
TRAVELERS**



1. ORIGINAL CIVIL WAR ERA BOWIE KNIFE

Full tang, 15 inches overall with 9½-inch clip blade. Horn grips. "Aston" scratched into shield. Nickel silver guard. Maker's mark of U (star) S on ricasso. Item 3659.

\$3,000.00

Who says you can't go back in time? The River Junction Trading Company of McGregor, Iowa, can take you there.

The company, founded in 1973, is like a 19th century dry goods store. Many of their products, both antique and newly made, would be right at home in the Old West.

They offer antique firearms, holsters, knives, clothing and other Old

West memorabilia. Many of their new clothing items, including hats, coats and suits, are made to order. Owners Jim and Linda Boeke pride themselves on the authenticity of their products. There's even a list on their website of all the period movies where their products have been used.

They also take antique items from the Old West in trade. Here's a look at some of the things you'll find:



2. ORIGINAL ANTIQUE CIVILIAN FULL FLAP HOLSTER

Authentic black holster of the Old West era will fit the following revolvers: Colt 1873 SAA 7½; 1851 Navy 7½; 1860 Army 8-inch; 1861 Navy 7½; 1875 Remington 7½; 1858 Remington 8-inch. Item 3866.

\$199.95



3. ORIGINAL ANTIQUE SHOTGUN CHAPS

Smooth leather chaps with nice patina. Patch pockets, belt with basket weave pattern stamped into it. Thin cut fringe on outside of legs. 1870s style. Item 3804.

\$1,295.00



4. BILLY THE KID STYLE HAT

Reproduction with dented 4½-inch crown hat as depicted in one of the few known photos of Billy the Kid. Three-inch brim. Made to order of 10X fur felt. Item 106.

\$250.95



5. COMBINATION RELOADING TOOL

For reloading .38 S&W ammo. Item 3370-98.

\$150.00

6. AUTHENTIC CONFEDERATE CAVALRY SABER

Unmarked Confederate saber from the Civil War. "Dog River" style. Wooden grip covered in leather with brass hilt. 40½ inches overall. Item 3731-JM.

\$995.00



7. GRIPS FOR COLT SAA

Made of jiggered bone. Item 3556.

\$380.00

8. LAST CAMPAIGN HAT

Reproduction of the issued hat used by Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders in the 1898 battle at San Juan Hill. Complete with crunched crown and turned up brim front and back. 5½-inch crown, 3¼-inch brim. Made to order from wool felt in black or pecan. Item 109.

\$89.95



11. WYATT HAT

Reproduction of the classic Wyatt Earp hat as shown in the movies. Made to order of black 10X fur felt with 4-inch open crown and 4-inch bound flat, stiff brim. Lining optional. Item 140.

\$250.95

10. BULLWHIP

Reproduction whip made of eight-plait braided leather with leather handle. Available in 6- or 10-foot lengths. Item 428.

\$69.95



9. SMITH & WESSON REVOLVER

S & W New Model Navy No. 3 top-break double action revolver in .44 S&W Russian with original grips. Made in 1881. Item 3948.

\$1,189.00



CONTACT

River Junction Trading Company
312 Main Street, McGregor,
IA 57157
Store open by appointment only
Toll free: 866-259-9172
www.riverjunction.com

Anything But Glamorous

**THE TRAIL HAND'S DAY-TO-DAY EXISTENCE WAS
A FAR CRY FROM HOLLYWOOD'S PORTRAYAL**

PHOTO CREDIT: VITO PALMISANO/GETTY



BY JOHN MCQUAID

These strong men were rough and ready and could handle any problems that came their way along the dusty trail from cattle rustlers to Indian attacks to breaking up brawls in the saloons. The American cowboys were considered knights of the Old West—but were they really?

Hollywood has certainly romanticized the life of the American cowboy as a two-fisted, six-gun toting idealist willing to face overwhelming odds to right a grievous wrong.

Look no further than Alan Ladd's title role in "Shane."

But the harsh reality of life on the plains of the Old West was that the everyday mundane tasks they had to perform were anything but romantic as depicted in today's movies or written in the dime store novels of the time.

Perhaps "jack-of-all-trades" would be a better description of the American cowboy. In the following story, we'll take a look at some of the real aspects of the cowboy life.



Driving cattle was an important job for the Old West cowboy, and it's a chore that continues on ranches to this day. (Pete Oxford/Getty)

1. DEAD EYE

Not every cowboy was an expert marksman, and they weren't getting into shootouts on a daily basis, but being able to shoot quickly and accurately were admirable skills. The cowboy's life often depended on his ability to eliminate threats. He dealt with rattlesnakes, hungry wolves, cattle rustlers, highwaymen, bandits and Native American warriors who didn't take kindly to the white man trespassing on their lands.

Many different types and brands of firearms were used in the Old West, and a cowboy often had to rely on what was available and

what he could afford.

In the last quarter of the 19th century, a popular sidearm was the Colt Frontier, a version of the Single Action Army that was chambered in .44-40. A major advantage of this revolver was the cowboy could get a Winchester 1873 lever action carbine that used the same ammo. (The Winchester was never chambered in .45 Colt during those times.)

With the Model 1873, you had 15 rounds of .44-40 to deal with threats or to hunt game. The Colt Frontier six-shooter was typically carried safely with five rounds. You didn't rest the hammer over a

chamber containing a live cartridge as a blow on the hammer could cause the pistol to fire.

The Colt offered very portable protection. It provided good stopping power at close quarters. Another advantage of the revolver was that it could be fired single-handed while the shooter was mounted on a horse.

2. ARKANSAS TOOTHPICK

Just as important as a cowboy's firearms was the knife he carried. Early on, with firearms that could sometimes be unreliable or slow to reload, the cowboy's blade tended to be larger. His knife



The chuck wagon was the gathering place for cowboys on a cattle drive. Not only did it serve as the camp kitchen, but it carried all of their other supplies and bedding as well. (Burke/Triolo Productions/Getty)

wasn't just a utilitarian tool; it had to double as a defensive weapon. A large hunting knife or Bowie knife made sense.

A cowboy needed his knife to clear a path, hack a sapling, skin a buck, make kindling, dig a fire pit and make sparks with flint, perform field surgery, and defend himself in close quarters. A large fixed blade knife such as a Bowie, also known as an "Arkansas Toothpick," would have been an excellent choice for the cowboy to take on the open plains.

As repeating firearms taking more reliable metallic cartridges became dominant, a cowboy's

knife of choice tended to be smaller and more practical to carry. With a properly armed cowboy, the knife became more important as a tool and less so as a weapon.

3. A TRUSTY STEED

There weren't any ATVs in the Old West, but the American cowboy had the best all-terrain vehicle of the time. The horse was just as important in settling the "Wild West" as the Colt revolver.

A cowboy had to choose his horse wisely as his life depended upon it. He had to be a skilled rider and know his horse's limitations.

ESSENTIAL COWBOY GEAR

1. Reliable firearms
2. A good knife
3. Quality saddle
4. Leather boots with good heels
5. Protective gear—chaps, cuffs and gloves
6. Wide-brimmed hat
7. Specialized tools for mending fences, reloading ammo, untying knots
8. Rope for cattle and securing gear

He also had to know how to take care of his steed.

The cowboy needed a strong horse that could carry him and his equipment across rough terrain for many miles and one that could gallop at a decent pace if need be.



This Stanley Borack painting shows cowboys at the ready to defend their herd against any possible trouble. (Superstock/Getty)



Roping skills were important to a cowboy on the ranch or on a drive. Some tools are timeless and the rope continues to be an important part of the cowboy's kit. (Westend61/Getty)



Winchester lever action rifles were prized possession for the cowboy, who depended on them for hunting and defense. From left are the models 1866, 1873 and 1886. (NV65/Getty)

“...“jack-of-all-trades” would be a better description of the American cowboy.”

A cowboy needed a horse that wouldn't spook easily. His horse had to be comfortable around the cattle herd and not get rattled at the sound of gunfire. A rattlesnake in the brush could cause the horse to bolt and suddenly throw the cowboy off its back, which could result in a fractured leg, arm or skull for our Knight of the Plains.

The cowboy needed a horse that was reliable and well suited for the environmental conditions of life in the American West. Some cowboys used mustangs that descended from the Spanish Barb, and others used Pintos and Appaloosas. Another good choice for



the cowboy would have been the Quarter horse. Some cowboys preferred the Morgan because of its calm demeanor and sturdy build. In reality, most of the horses cowboys used were most likely mixed-breed grade horses.

4. BACK IN THE SADDLE AGAIN

Our American cowboys spent many hours in the saddle and had to pick one that was comfortable and durable. Riding the open range was no easy task and often led to "saddle sores" if the cowboy chose the wrong saddle.

Cowboys spent considerable money on their saddles, up to \$100, which would have been about four times the value of the horse they were riding. A fine quality saddle was a big investment but would last the cowboy for most of his career.

A well-made saddle could allow a cowboy and his mount to cover 70 miles a day. A poorly made saddle would often lead to ruining the posture of a horse.

What we know as the Western saddle was derived from those used by Mexican vaqueros. Some of these Western saddles weighed in at 40 pounds. The horn on the saddle was used for roping. The stirrups were designed for balancing the cowboy when he was riding down steep slopes. Leather flaps shielded the cowboy's legs from the sweat of the horse on a hot summer days.

A good set of leather saddlebags also came in handy for the cowboy to store additional gear and supplies he would need on the trail. A good quality canteen that held fresh water was also very valuable on the trail, especially in more arid environments.

TYPICAL COWBOY CHORES

On the ranch

1. Roundups
2. Branding
3. Fence mending
4. Predator control
5. Training horses

On the cattle drive

1. Herding cattle
2. Bringing in strays
3. Guarding against predators, thieves
4. Land navigation
5. Making supply runs

Around the camp

1. Collecting firewood
2. Hauling water
3. Tending horses
4. Maintaining/repairing gear
5. Cooking meals

5. TYING THE KNOT

A cowboy had to be proficient in roping cattle and spent years honing his skills. He also had to have a good knowledge of knots to keep his gear secured.

A good quality rope would be tied to the cowboy's saddle horn with leather straps and coiled for quick use. A cowboy's rope was an important tool out on the range and helped him lasso loose cattle or a spooked horse. The rope was an essential tool for the cowboy, and it would have been near to impossible for him to do his job without it.

The cowboy used different types of rope depending on its use. Rawhide ropes were used for lassoing cattle instead of hair ropes, which were prone to kink. Hair rope was used for saddle reins and tie rope. Shorter lengths of rope would be used for steer and calf



Cowboys get a well-deserved meal at the chuck wagon in this colorized photo from around the turn of the century. (Photoquest/Getty)

roping, while longer lengths were used for outside catching of wild stock.

New rope had to be stretched, made supple and seasoned before a experienced cowboy would put it to good use. A skilled roper could make a rope “sing” when he threw the loop. A “ketch rope” was a term used to differentiate it from other ropes. A lariat was primarily used to tether animals. A good coil of rope was almost an extension of the cowboy’s arm.

6. CAMPFIRE COOKING

Working a herd of cattle on a drive was demanding labor, and at the end of the day, cowboys had to be fed. Food had to be able to survive a trip out on the open plains. There was no such thing as plastic coolers in the “Old West,” so they had to consider food that would keep without being kept on ice.

Texan cowboys would make cattle drives all the way to Sedalia, Missouri, due to the Northerners’ taste for beef. Wild game that they

“Not every cowboy was an expert marksman...but being able to shoot quickly and accurately were admirable skills.”

saw along the way became part of the menu. This supplemented their usual hard biscuits, beans, bacon,



beef jerky and salt that they brought onto the trail.

Cowboys often had sourdough biscuits, which kept longer than bread. Beans kept well on the trail and were filling when cooked up with a little bit of salt pork. Naturally, beef would find its way into a pot of chili or stew as well.

Cowboys carried their own food at first, but as time went on they started using wagons to haul their food and bedding. The invention of the “chuck wagon” design

was credited to Charles Goodnight, an early leader of the trail drive era. The chuck wagon had heavier running gear and compartments that held cooking utensils and supplies.

The cooks on the chuck wagons served as doctors, gravediggers and repairmen. They could shoe a horse or sew in addition to being the cook of the outfit running a cattle drive to the railhead in Abilene.

The cook served as second in command and received better pay than the hands working the cattle. Well-fed cowboys that had plenty of black coffee performed much better on the trail.

7. DRESSED FOR SUCCESS

What a cowboy wore had more to do with practicality than making a style statement. He needed a pair of well-made leather boots for riding his horse and roping. The high heels would help him stay in his stirrups and act as a brace when lassoing cattle. A good set of spurs attached to the heels of the cowboy's boots helped him to urge his horse to greater speeds when he needed it.

A cowboy also needed a good set of chaps to protect him from brush and the environment. Cowboys often wore leather vests that afforded them some protection from the environment and elements. Many vests had additional pockets that the cowboys would use for storing cigarette tobacco and rolling papers.

A good quality wide-brimmed hat afforded protection from the

sun and acted as an umbrella during rain storms. Watching many of the early Western movies, you'd think that everyone wore the same type of hat and chose one in white or black depending on which side of the law they lived. In truth, many different shapes and styles of hats were worn.

A cowboy's “wild rag” or bandana had many uses beyond that of a handkerchief. He could put it over his face in a dust storm or soak it in water and wear it around his neck to keep himself cool. He could use it to lift hot kettles from the campfire or filter his drinking water.

He also used leather wrist cuffs to protect him from brush, hot branding irons, wire fencing and from having his rope tear at his wrists and shirtsleeves. A pair of heavy duty leather gloves was also essential to the cowboy's kit. They protected the cowboy from blisters, rope burns and splinters.

Cowboys were also fond of their “slickers,” or oiled long coats that protected them and their saddles from wind, rain and snow.

NOT A GLAMOROUS LIFE

All in all, the cowboy life was difficult, dirty and sometimes lonely. It was filled with hard work and mundane chores. But Hollywood spends little time showing those aspects of life in the Old West, and that is understandable. It can be exciting to watch John Wayne shooting a Winchester or a Colt. But can you imagine going to the movies to see him sewing his torn shirt by the campfire or repairing his saddle or digging a hole for a privy? **GNSL**

The Mild, Mild West



**DEPICTIONS OF THE OLD WEST AS
EXTREMELY VIOLENT WERE GREATLY
EXAGGERATED**

BY MIKE SEARSON

Whenever the subject of carrying firearms comes up, we often hear from folks that making it legal to carry would transform an area into “The Wild West.”

In reality, the transformation of the crime rate for a modern metropolitan area into the days of the “Wild West” would probably be a good thing as the actual crime rates of that time period between 1861 and 1901 were very low.



PHOTO CREDIT: JACOM STEPHENS/GETTY



Contrary to Western movie lore, banks were not robbed very often in the Old West. (Oleksiy Maksymenko/Getty)

SOURCE: MOVIES, TV & NOVELS

Our misinformed brothers and sisters tend to obtain their basic knowledge of the Old West from movies and television shows. If these forms of media were to be taken as truth, they would have you believe that everyone was decked out in circa 1950s Western Wear and packing a pair of Colt Single Action Army revolvers for a trip to the General Store to buy a Sarsaparilla and piece of penny candy.

A steady diet of Western movies would have the viewer believe that danger lurked behind every rock in the desert in the form of bank robbers, train robbers, man

killers, rattlesnakes, Indians on the war path or crazed cow hands, and miners itching to have a showdown in the street at high noon, while the genteel types nervously peered from behind windows with slightly drawn curtains.

Nothing could be further from the truth. The crime statistics of the 19th century do not support this. In fact, shootouts in the streets were a rarity as were train and bank robberies. The few that did occur would receive widespread coverage and in a day and age when the only form of media was the newspaper. With no real wire service for newspapers until the last quarter of the 19th century, small incidents were played up in

order to sell newspapers.

This cannot be solely laid at the feet of 19th century newsmen, though. Dime novels and “Penny Dreadfuls” of the era share much of the blame. As can be seen with modern pop culture, violence and sex sell movies, books, television shows and all forms of media.

In the 19th century, it was mostly the violence and adventure tales that sold well. Many of these novels were based on actual people and places and what they recounted ranged from “slight exaggerations” to outright falsifications of the fact. It did not end in the 19th century. The stories continued and the fiction was often passed down as truth.



The James Gang strikes again, but this time in the film, "The Long Riders" with actors (from left) James Keach, Stacy Keach and Randy Quaid. Western movies have helped to perpetuate the myth that there was lots of crime in the Old West. (Mondadori/Getty)

MINERS' MANNERS

Hollywood movies and television shows also portray the mining camps of the Old West as violent and lawless, but the historical record shows otherwise. As early as 1848, miners formed contracts with each another to prevent violent squabbles.

These contracts established property rights in land and mineral rights that the miners would enforce on their own and were established with unanimous consent. If a miner did not abide by the rules of the contract, his claim would be forfeit.

As these were in territories with little to no government, justices of the peace and arbitrators

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Crime records weren't meticulously kept in the 19th century, but even so, most credible sources show crime rates were lower in the Old West than in most large, urban areas today.

For example, one study by W. Eugene Hollon pointed out that between 1870 and 1885, in the notorious cow towns of Abilene, Ellsworth, Wichita, Dodge City and Caldwell, there were only 45 murders. That equates to 1 per 100,000 residents per year. Compare that to today's Baltimore with a murder rate of about 45 per 100,000 residents.

Some Old West towns did have gun bans in place, but this can hardly be credited for making the entire region during this era safer than the worst inner cities today, which all have strict gun laws.

Other studies have shown that other crimes such as robbery, burglary, theft and rape occurred far less in the Old West era. In his look at the "wild" mining towns of Aurora, Nevada, and Bodie, California, historian Roger D. McGrath found that many major cities today have robbery rates about 20 times higher and burglary and theft rates that are 30 to 40 times higher.

Though statistics can sometimes be twisted and tailored to favor your particular side of the argument, there is reason to believe that overall crime was lower, and one reason was that many outlaws were afraid of being confronted by outraged armed citizens who had no tolerance for criminal behavior.

were hired who would go on to develop extensive bodies of property and criminal law for the territories. Add to that fact that miners were often armed, and it is easy to see why crime rates were so low.

In the later years of the Old

West, ranchers established cattlemen's associations in a similar manner that were often staffed by expert gunmen to deter cattle rustling. People often talk of the lawlessness of the Kansas cow towns like Abilene and Dodge City,



but in reality, even rough towns like this averaged only 1.5 murders per cattle season.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE OIL BOOM TOWNS

Many of the Hollywood Western storylines were filled with "retrojection" from the oil booms of the early 20th century and the glorified tales of professional bank robbers of the Depression era.

Renowned lawmen such as Frank Hamer described the oil boom town of Borger, Texas, as a "gunfight that lasted 365 days."

It would not take long for supporting statements by survivors of

the frontier period to wax reminiscent and say that the old cow towns and mining camps were the same in their day.

However, the early 20th century had a different effect: Automobiles and trains could get the "bad elements" to these towns quicker than they could in the days of wagon trains and stagecoaches. Some of these towns, like Kilgore, Texas, went from 800 residents to 8,000 in as little as 24 hours.

Most of the newcomers were roughnecks and tradesmen in search of work, but a good percentage were the cardsharps, hucksters, prostitutes, thieves and

dealers in illicit substances such as drugs or alcohol that invariably flowed to these areas.

For motion picture producers looking to make Western themed films, events in these towns gave them ample story lines for their films. They simply changed the times and settings. The huge number of "Westerns" filmed in the turbulent '20s overwhelmed viewers with the amounts of violence on the screen and led them to believe that it was how things actually happened.

Films based on ice cream socials, barn raising, laying railroad track and non-confrontational



homesteading do not tend to do well at the box office, after all.

WOULD IT BE BAD?

So the next time you hear someone say that “relaxing firearms laws would turn (insert firearms restrictive city or state here) into the Wild, Wild West,” ask them if they think that really is a bad thing. **GNSL**

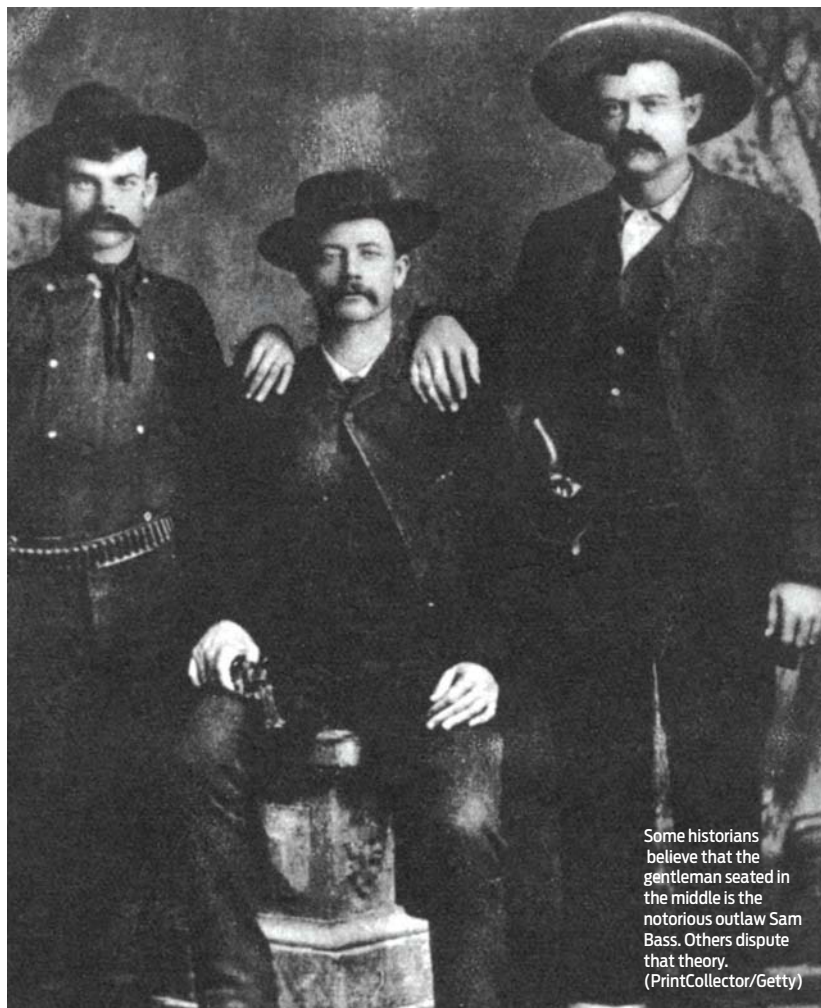
Crime Comparison

Three Old West Cities
1 murder per 100,000 residents per year

Modern Baltimore

45 murders per 100,000 residents

“A steady diet of Western movies would have the viewer believe that danger lurked behind every rock in the desert...”



Some historians believe that the gentleman seated in the middle is the notorious outlaw Sam Bass. Others dispute that theory. (PrintCollector/Getty)



Outlaws that were identified despite their disguises, often had to face the wrath of outraged and armed citizens. (Superstock/Getty)

BADG BULLETS

**FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT, TIMES HAVE
CHANGED SINCE THE WILD WEST ...
BUT NOT EVERYTHING**

BY JOHN MCQUAID

Thanks to Hollywood, we tend to think of Old West lawmen ending outlaws' criminal careers by having them soak up a few rounds from their Colt Peacemakers. Yet, is that image vastly different from how modern cops are portrayed in the current shoot-'em-up flicks?

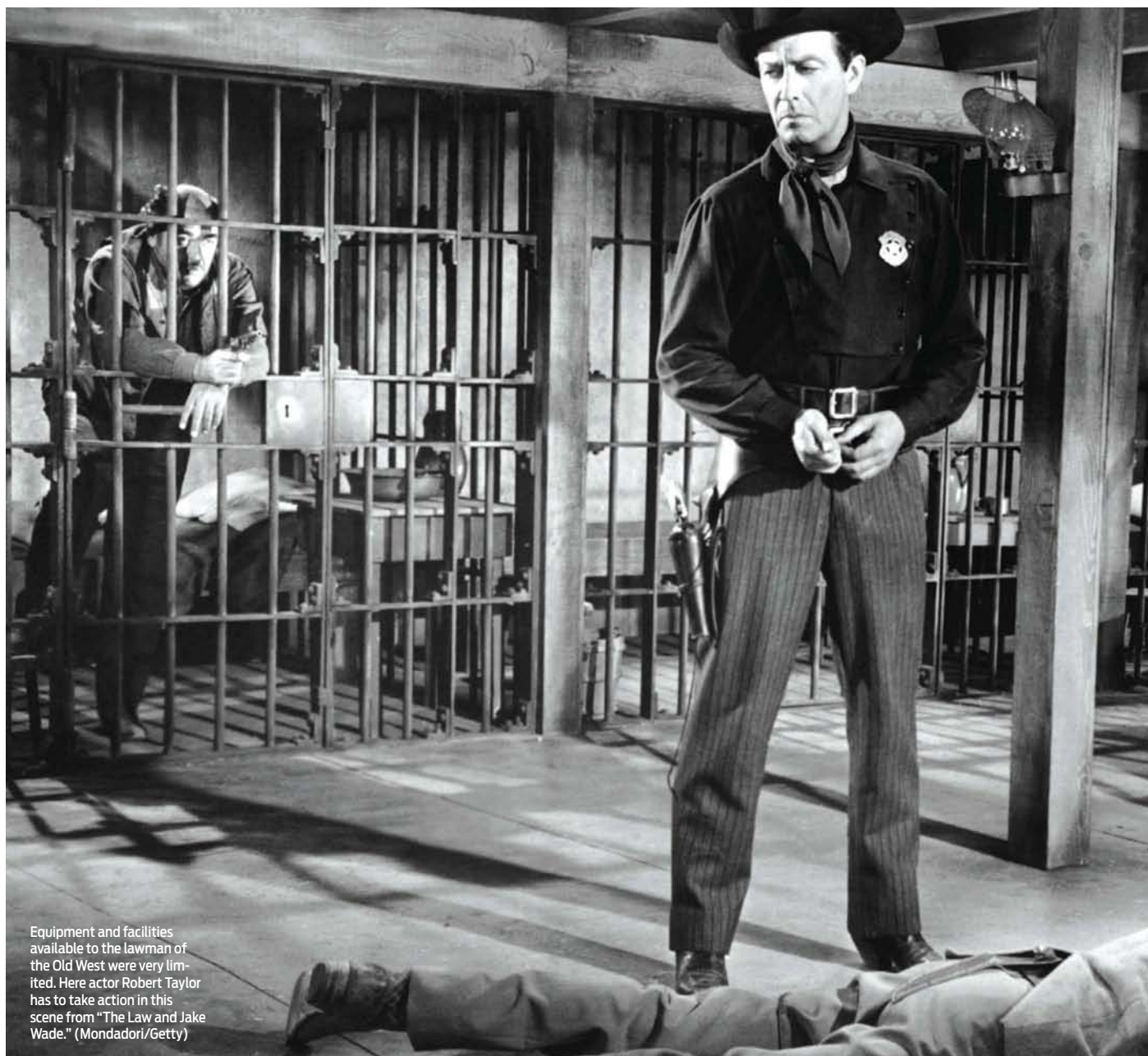
Neither image is completely accurate.

So how do police officers today stack up to the lawmen of the Old West, and what are the differences of the two eras? Some of it, surprisingly, has changed little.

ES &



PHOTO CREDIT: DNY59/GETTY



Equipment and facilities available to the lawman of the Old West were very limited. Here actor Robert Taylor has to take action in this scene from "The Law and Jake Wade." (Mondadori/Getty)

1. HIRING AND TRAINING

In the Old West, lawmen were hired based on reputation, or because they had a talent with firearms and were available. They put on badges and went to work. Some were former criminals, while others crossed back and forth on both sides of the law throughout their careers.

Today, officers have to undergo lengthy background investigations and psychological evaluations be-

fore they're hired. Most have to complete a six-month training academy before taking to the streets. Even then, they usually have several weeks of supervised field training.

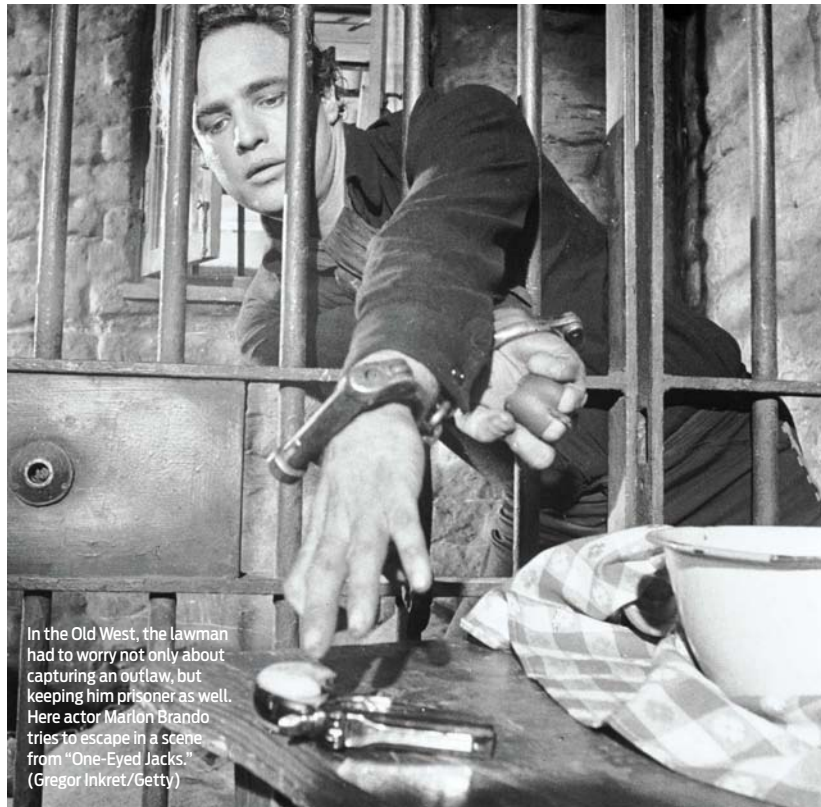
2. BETTER, LESS LETHAL OPTIONS

Many encounters that would have likely ended with a suspect being shot or pistol whipped in the Old West are resolved these days

with less lethal options, such as collapsible batons, pepper spray and Tasers.

3. OUT ON A TECHNICALITY

Old West lawmen did not have to deal with bad men being released on technicalities. Rules of evidence were rudimentary and the Miranda Warning was non-existent. Imagine a horse thief being set free because the local sheriff didn't tell him he had the right to



In the Old West, the lawman had to worry not only about capturing an outlaw, but keeping him prisoner as well. Here actor Marlon Brando tries to escape in a scene from "One-Eyed Jacks." (Gregor Inkret/Getty)

remain silent before making an incriminating statement.

4. PHYSICAL EVIDENCE

Physical evidence, including fingerprints and DNA, can be crucial pieces of the puzzle in establishing a defendant's guilt. This wasn't available to the Old West lawman. He depended on sometimes unreliable eye-witness accounts and suspect confessions.

As time progresses, it is be-

coming very common for the crook to be captured on video surveillance. Modern technology has made it easy for the small grocery shop owner to buy a high definition DVR recorder that delivers high-resolution video of a defendant coming into the store and stealing merchandise off the shelf.

Ballistic identification wasn't developed like it is today. An Old West lawman might be able to tell the caliber of the bullet fired, but

microscopic examination and comparison of fired bullets for marks of a gun barrel's lands and grooves wasn't what it is today.

5. THE DUTY BELT

You don't have to look much further than a police officer's duty belt to see many of the advances in law enforcement. It holds a lightweight, high capacity semi-auto pistol; spare magazines; modern handcuffs; portable two-

OLD WEST LAWYEN TRAITS

Lawmen of the Old West had to be intelligent, cunning, brave and in good physical shape to chase after outlaws. He had to be an excellent shot with his Colt Peacemaker and Model 1873 Winchester or other chosen weapons if he was going to survive his career as a lawman. Knowing how to defend himself with a bowie knife could also come in pretty handy if that old Peacemaker decided not to bark when called upon.

Wild Bill Hickok was a Civil War scout before becoming a lawman. The skill sets many Old West lawmen learned in the Union and Confederate armies would have been useful in working as a law enforcement officer.

An Old West lawman had to know how to survive in the rough country of the American West. Tracking a gang of outlaws could span great distances and often crossed into territory inhabited by Native American tribes. Knowing how to speak the native tongue and having the ability to be an excellent negotiator could often mean the difference of life and death.

Knowledge of hunting, tracking and remaining cool-headed while taking gunfire were also good qualities for a lawman of the 1860s into the early 1900s.



Imagine how Old West lawmen would have marveled over today's firearms, such as this officer's Glock pistol. (Jacom Stephens/Getty)

way radio; powerful LED flashlight; pepper spray; latex gloves; and Taser.

Under the officer's shirt is a bulletproof vest, an item that surely would have saved the lives of countless officers had it been available in the Old West.

Just imagine the look on his face if he saw a Glock 21 stuffed with 13 rounds of .45 ACP hollow points. I wonder how he would have marveled at the firepower of an M4 carbine holding a 30-round magazine of 5.56-mm boat tail hollow points.

6. IN THE VEHICLE

Most police officers today have given up the horse and ride around

in air-conditioned patrol vehicles. There, the officer has an onboard computer that provides fast access to computerized criminal records, warrants, driver's license and vehicle data. License plates readers alert officers of passing stolen vehicles or if there are warrants on the owners. Onboard cameras document criminal behavior.

In the Old West, lawmen riding outside of town might not hear about a deadly saloon brawl or a stagecoach robbery for hours. Today, callers hit 911 on their cell phones and, within seconds, dispatchers are notifying patrols of crimes committed and suspect vehicles that might be headed their way.

Just imagine the logistics of transporting a live prisoner back to the jail on his horse.

7. OTHER SUPPORT SERVICES

Old West lawmen were often on their own covering vast regions. In town, a posse of local townspeople might be their only help. Today, a quick transmission on the two-way radio and backup is normally minutes away. Officers today can often call in specialized assistance in the form of canine patrols, hazardous devices units, evidence technicians, and accident reconstruction teams and SWAT units with their night vision and other specialized gear.

Coordinated searches and

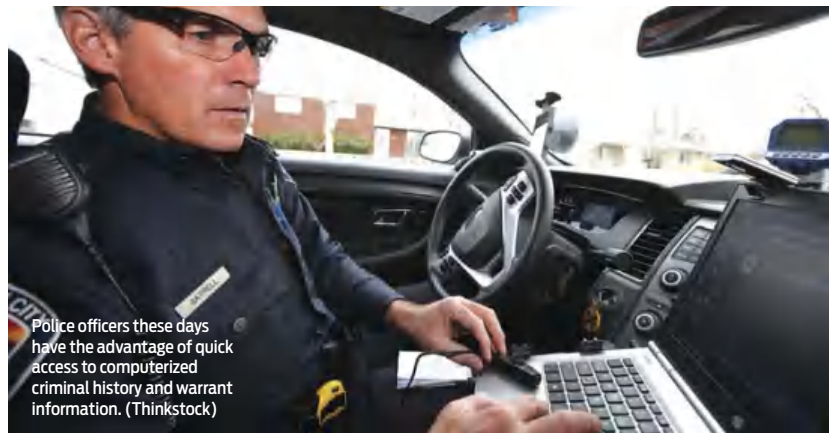


Two-way radios are essential for today's police officers to receive calls and call for backup. What did the Old West lawmen do without them? Often they were on their own. (Jacom Stephens/Getty)

surveillance can be conducted with the support of helicopters equipped with Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR) devices. SCUBA teams can recover evidence that would have been forever lost to the Old West lawman. Crime labs can analyze potential evidence.

An Old West lawman hunting down an outlaw had to deal with lonely nights on the range with a scorched pot of black coffee over a campfire. The hunt could take him away from home for days or weeks.

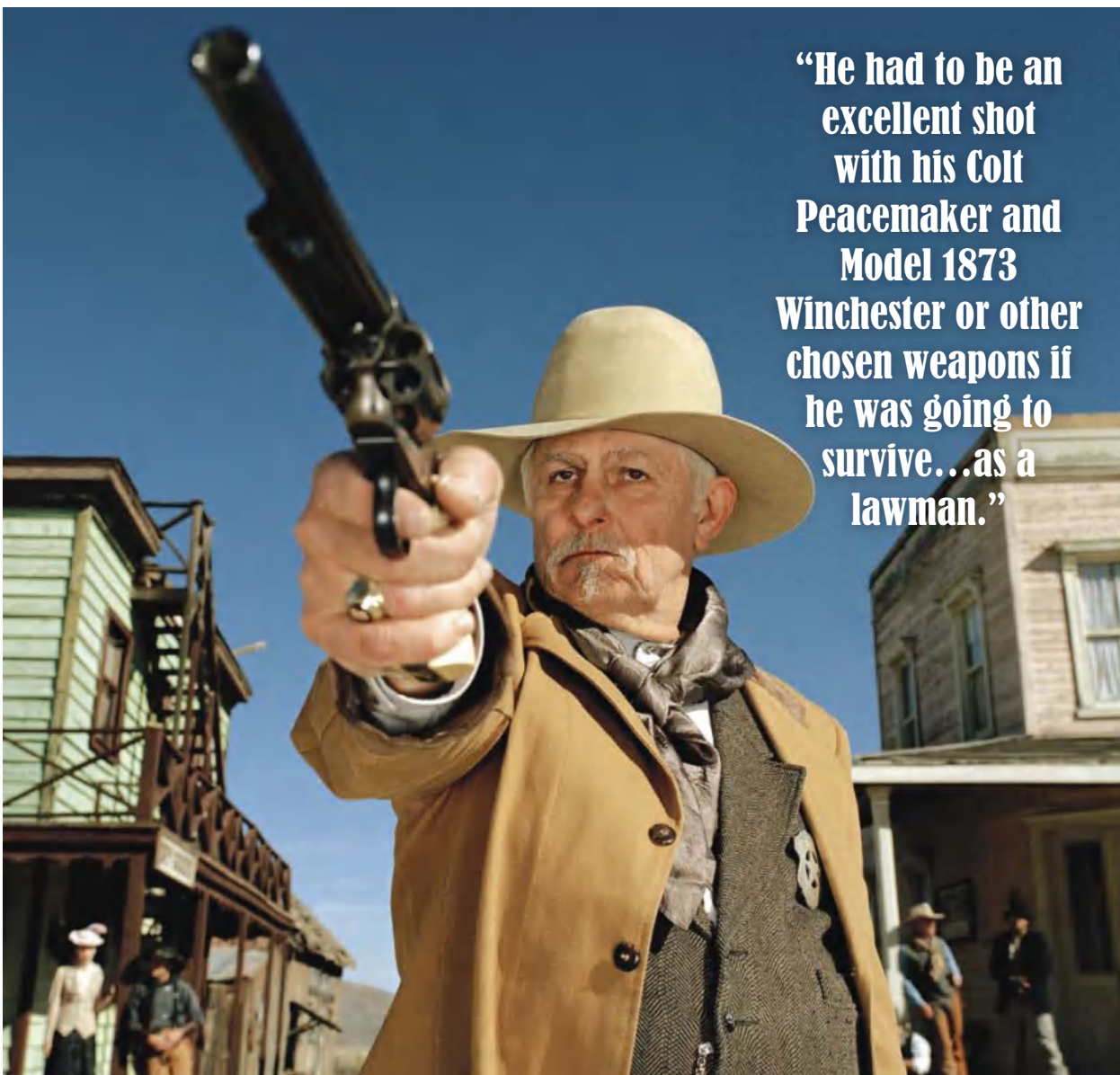
Today, officers can slide through the Dunkin' Donuts drive-through for a mocha latte and a cinnamon roll. Most of the time, they go home at the end of their shifts.



Police officers these days have the advantage of quick access to computerized criminal history and warrant information. (Thinkstock)

OLD WEST LAWMEN DIDN'T HAVE THESE

- Elaborate background checks before hiring
- Academy training before working in the field
- Uniforms that confirm officers as authority figures
- Backup that is normally minutes away
- Fast access to computerized criminal records, warrants, driver license and vehicle information
- Fingerprint and DNA databases
- Two-way radio communications
- More non-lethal options—collapsible batons, pepper spray, Tasers
- Secure jail facilities
- Support of canine and SWAT units, evidence technicians, crime labs, and aircraft—like helicopters equipped with Forward-Looking Infrared (FLIR)



“He had to be an excellent shot with his Colt Peacemaker and Model 1873 Winchester or other chosen weapons if he was going to survive...as a lawman.”

Although some officers today might scoff at the single action Colt revolvers of the Old West, those guns were very effective. (Matthias Clamer/Getty)

Old West lawmen taking prisoners into custody often had makeshift holding facilities or rudimentary jail cells. Today, officers drop prisoners off at the secure county lockup and the jail staff takes over from there.

GETTING THE JOB DONE

Even without all of the modern equipment lawmen of the Wild West got the job done, many times with the help of the local townspeople.

1. ARMED CITIZENS

Outlaw Charlie Pitts was gunned down by law enforcement after a botched bank robbery in Northfield, Minnesota. His partners, the Bob, Jim and Cole Younger, were caught and sent to prison. Armed citizens helped to thwart the robbers' getaway.

2. NO HONOR AMONG THIEVES

Jesse James, also involved in the above crime, was later killed by one of his own gang members who

wanted to cash in on his bounty money.

3. DEAD OR ALIVE

Sheriff Pat Garrett shot and killed “cop killer” Billy the Kid in 1881. City Marshal Joe Townsend killed John Wesley Hardin's outlaw cousin, Emanuel Clements, in Ballinger, Texas.

4. THE BOUNTY

Putting a bounty on a man could be just as effective as chas-



Wild Bill Hickok was hired for his skill with a gun and his experience as a scout. Today's officers have to undergo a thorough background investigation and months of training when they're hired. (Print Collector/Getty)

ing him down. A good sheriff back in those times would have been smart to cultivate informants to help him solve crimes. Posting cash reward signs for anyone having information on the most recent bank robbery could loosen some lips.

He also had to have a rapport with the criminal element as this could lead to information vital to solving a crime.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE...

Yes, there are big differences between how Old West lawmen operated compared to today's police officers. Technology and an ever-evolving criminal justice system have dramatically changed the law enforcement profession.

There are many constants in law enforcement, however. Good old-fashioned common sense, for instance, is priceless and timeless in police work. Another part of being a good cop then and now is the ability to sit down and talk to people.

In my own law enforcement career, I've successfully closed many cases by gaining a rapport with witnesses and victims who were initially afraid to cooperate. And I've interviewed many suspects who have confessed to the crimes they committed. Having sympathy for a victim and an understanding of what motivates a suspect can be invaluable tools in solving crimes.

Without the benefits of

TRACKING THE OLD WEST OUTLAW

Without all the high-tech equipment, how could the Old West lawman track down the outlaw? Sometimes the only evidence left at the scene of the crime would consist of boot or horseshoe prints. If one or more of the robbers were winged in a gunfight, then the sheriff might have a blood trail to follow if he was quick enough.

A lawman had to know how to cut a track and look for signs of the outlaws passing through an area. Looking at sets of horseshoe tracks could determine how many men were involved in a stagecoach or bank robbery. Checking the remains of their campfire and any remaining heat could give him an idea of how long they had left the site.

Was there fresh horse dung by a watering hole? Horses have to be fed and watered, so knowing where bodies of water are located would help track down the suspects. What about trampled grass and broken twigs?

These are just a few examples of what the sheriff and his posse would look for when tracking down a band of thieves. I'm sure trailing a band of cattle rustlers might be just a bit easier.

today's science, Old West lawmen had to be great listeners, intuitive body language experts and excellent interviewers. They were likely excellent at gathering intelligence from the locals and had established networks of informants. Being an excellent diplomat can garner a lot more cooperation when conducting a criminal investigation.

I am fairly certain the good sheriff, marshals and Texas Rangers of the Old West employed those same techniques today, minus, of course, that "Miranda" thing.

Most of all, like today, they had to be willing to put their lives on the line for little compensation, with a readiness to take action using split-second judgment to get the job done.

GNSL

REVOLVER REHAB

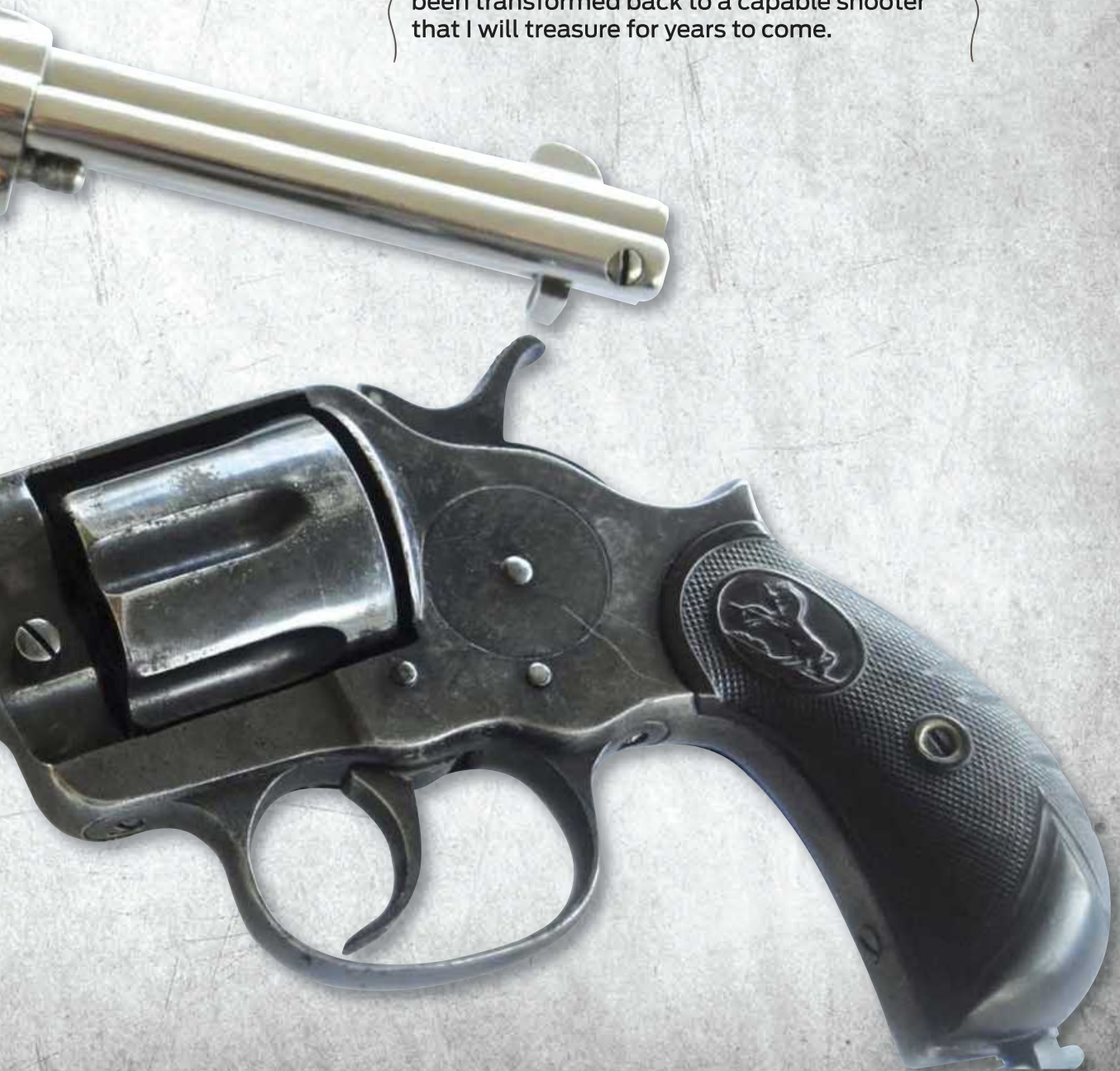
**HOW TO TRANSFORM AN
OLD COLT M1878 FRONTIER
SIX-SHOOTER INTO A
CAPABLE SHOOTER**



While the Colt Single Action Army (top) was very popular, Colt also made other models, such as the double action M1878. The author found this one in a gun shop and had it repaired to shooting condition.

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MIKE SEARSON

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder, but sometimes you can find someone's trash that, with a little work, can be turned into a real treasure. That's the case with my old Colt M1878. It might not win any beauty contests, but it's been transformed back to a capable shooter that I will treasure for years to come.





“As a shooter, this M1878 performs as well as it did when it left Colt’s about 117 years ago.”

THE FIND

While visiting a local sporting goods retailer, the curator of the Gun Library approached me and said, “I have something you might be interested in.”

Having heard Erick say those nine words numerous times in the past, I knew it was going to create a dent in my wallet. Fortunately, this time it would be a little bit more indirect.

He went into the back room and produced a Colt M1878 Frontier Six-Shooter. The big double action revolver chambered in 44 WCF (44-40) with a bird’s head grip was missing most of its finish and

the lanyard ring, but otherwise looked complete.

Knowing the sky-rocketing prices of antique Colts, I examined it carefully before getting ready to turn it down.

The cylinder did not have positive lock up, and hitting one of the chambers would cause it to spin completely like a roulette wheel in one of the downtown casinos.

About 60 percent of the finish was remaining and there was some pitting on the frame. The hammer and trigger seemed to work fine and the numbers matched. The single line of Colt’s address was clearly stamped on

COLT MODEL 1878

Manufacturer: Colt Patent Firearms

Years manufactured: 1878 - 1907

Number produced: 51,210 including 4,600 manufactured for the U.S.

Army in 1902

Calibers: 32-20 WCF, 38 Colt, 38-40 WCF, 41 Colt, 44-40 WCF, 45 Colt, 455 Webley, 476 Eley

Barrel lengths: 3 inches, 3.5 inches, 4 inches, 4.75 inches, 5.5 inches and 7.5 inches

Designers: William Mason and Charles Brinckerhoff Richards

Capacity: 6

the top of the barrel, but the markings on the side of the barrel were faint.

Aside from the lock up, the revolver was in decent shape consid-



(top) The Colt Single Action Army was the predecessor to the author's Model 1878 and predates the double action model by five years.



(bottom) The M1878 is slightly larger than the Colt SAA. When the M1878 was dropped from production in 1907, however, its cylinders were converted for use in the SAA.

ering it was made in 1898, but what caught my attention were six notches cut into the left grip panel.

Asking how much the shop wanted for it, I was preparing to say, "Thanks, but no." When the answer came back at \$79 out the door, I figured even if it could not be restored, it could be parted out for a decent profit. I bought it on the spot.

HISTORY

Samuel Colt had tinkered with double-action revolvers when he founded his company in 1847, but he found the design to be lacking and unreliable. Thirty years later,

"ALASKAN MODELS" MISNAMED

The 4,600 M1878 revolvers made for the U.S. Ordnance Department in 1902 went off to arm the Philippine Constabulary under Brigadier General Henry T. Allen during the Philippine Insurrection. They were chambered in the Army's 45 Colt round and had a modification, which leads to confusion and misinformation that persists to this day.

Fourteen years of complaints about the heavy and still somewhat fragile trigger system prompted the Army to demand a longer trigger for more leverage and a heavier mainspring to handle the harder primers of military issued ammunition.

A new and larger trigger guard was designed to accommodate this. The appearance of this large trigger guard has led to the incorrect assumption by collectors and historians alike that it was to allow the revolver to be fired while wearing heavy winter gloves and yields the patently false name of the "Alaskan Model" for these variants.

Colt's Patent Fire Arms would turn out their first double-action revolver called the M1877, better known as the Thunderer or Lightning model, depending upon the caliber (41 Colt and 38 Colt respectively).

This was a graceful small frame revolver best suited for concealment, but the trigger and lock work were considered to be fragile. It proved popular enough that Colt's clientele clamored for a larger frame version. In 1878, William Mason, Colt's factory manager, and Charles Brinckerhoff Richards, Superintendent of Engineering, developed a more robust design based on their first large framed effort, the Model 1873, better known as the Single Action Army (SAA) or "Peacemaker."

Essentially a strut was added to connect the hammer and trigger to the design of the SAA. The lock work was more closely related to their previous M1877 design, but the parts were larger, making for a more robust handgun. Some of these parts are interchangeable with the SAA.

The M1878 went by the catalog name of "Frontier Six-Shooter" when chambered in 44 WCF. Other calibers offered included the 45 Colt, 38 WCF (38-40), 32 WCF (32-20), 455 Webley and 476 Eley.

Colt manufactured 51,210 Model 1878 revolvers between 1878 and 1907, including 4,600 for the U.S. Ordnance Department in 1902.

Sadly, many of these old revolvers have not survived to the present. A huge number of these old revolvers, along with others, were melted down in the 1940s for the World War II effort. Many more were given to children to play with as the ammunition became something of a rarity in the 20th century. (My cynical side believes this may be the origin of the notches on the grip panel.)

ASSESSING THE M1878

Despite its exterior and the lock up issues, the rest of the revolver was sound. The lanyard ring was missing, but that is an easily replaceable part. Most important, the chambers in the cylinder were within spec for 44 WCF and the rifling in the barrel was strong with no evidence of corrosion or pitting in the bore.

As the revolver was made in late 1898, I decided that only black-powder type loads should be used. Some so-called experts incorrectly believe that the 1898 date was established to coincide with the start of the Boer War, or that it was 70 years prior to the Gun Control act of 1968 and that is

why this was made the cutoff date for modern firearms.

In actuality, that date was chosen because it represented the advent of the invention of smokeless powder.

With regard to fixing the lock work and possibly retiming the revolver, there are only a handful of capable gunsmiths in the United States who can complete this type of work. I turned to one of the best in the business, Sal Lanara.

Lanara works almost exclusively on the Colt M1877 and M1878 revolvers. When I described the problem, he asked me to send in the revolver for assessment. His unofficial take over the phone was that it could be fixed for under \$200 and the cost of return shipping.

With the revolver in Lanara's capable hands, he found part of the loading gate ratchet was worn away and the hand needed to be replaced. An errant coil spring beneath the sear spring indicated that the sear spring might have issues, and the grip alignment pin

and mainspring tensioning screw were missing.

The hand and cylinder ratchet needed to be replaced, and Lanara had a spare lanyard ring on hand. With these parts replaced, the old Colt was able to be brought back to life.

The total cost to restore the M1878 as a safe "shooter" came out to \$395, including parts, labor and return shipping. Lanara has a high workload on these types of revolvers, but I received it back in a little less than 60 days.

TO REFINISH OR NOT?

The Colt in question was not a family heirloom or a particularly historical piece, but I considered refinishing it. This is where a restoration project can make or break a collector.

For a professional restoration to the condition in which it left the factory, I would be looking at a \$1,400 to \$2,000 investment. The revolver had a fair degree of pitting and had been re-blued at least once in its life.

THE 44 WCF ROUND

Models of the M1878 chambered in 44-40 or 44 WCF (Winchester Center Fire) were labeled as "Frontier" models because this cartridge had a hand in taming the Old West.

This was because Colt offered revolvers chambered in this caliber and Winchester, Marlin and Remington offered rifles for it as well, giving the shooter ammunition compatibility between long gun and handgun. Contrary to popular belief, long guns were not chambered in the 45 Colt loading until the middle of the 20th century.

The name of the round comes from the fact that it was composed of a .44 caliber bullet backed by 40 grains of black powder. The original chambering was a 200-grain bullet that travelled at 1,240 feet per second. In 1886, Winchester's rival, Remington, offered a slightly heavier 217-grain bullet that was about 60 feet per second slower.

By 1895, Winchester switched to a smokeless powder load that sent a 200-grain bullet downrange at 1,300 feet per second, but the round began to wane in popularity and almost disappeared by the 1940s.

The 44-40 went through a revival in the 1950s due to the popularity of Western themed television shows and slipped back into obscurity by the 1970s. Most recently, it has returned to the public's attention through the sport of Cowboy Action Shooting.

Restoration would include stripping the old finish, sanding the surface to the level of the pits, polishing and prepping all the parts and possibly having the roll marks, patent dates, serial number and factory address stamped again.

On a revolver that had no personal meaning to me, I elected to forego this expense as I knew I would never recover the funds spent in a complete restoration.

The dry weather of Northern Nevada gives us little trepidation about the potential ravages of rust. Having it complete and in working order makes it worth closer to \$700 or \$800. Not bad for a \$79 initial investment.



The loading gate on the M1878 seems thin and basic, yet holds a part critical to the revolver's lock work.

ON THE RANGE

Shooters need to be careful with these old firearms. Metallurgy was hit or miss during the 19th century. Many companies, including Colt, were not known for using the best steel, and a modern smokeless powder round (even a so-called “cowboy” load) can have disastrous consequences.

I prepared some special black powder loads using Winchester brass, Pyrodex cartridge grade powder and hard cast 200-grain flat point bullets I made with a Lyman mold.

As a shooter, this M1878 performs as well as it did when it left Colt's about 117 years ago. Upon firing the Frontier Six-Shooter, I was rewarded with a six-shot group at 50 feet with all rounds almost touching and measuring 3.25 inches from side to side with two rounds that key-holed.

FAMOUS PACKERS OF THE M1878

- Buffalo Bill Cody wielded a pair of M1878's sporting 9-inch barrels in many of his Wild West Shows.
- Deputy Marshall George Wellman, who was murdered by the Red Sash Gang, carried a nickel-plated M1878 with pearl grips, bearing serial number 10373. It is on display at the Jim Gatchell Museum in Buffalo, Wyoming.
- Captain Jack Crawford and fellow buckskin poet and scout “Rowdy Joe” Lowe roamed the frontier with them.
- The two Army scouts that tracked Geronimo, Tom Horn and Al Sieber, famously carried Model 1878s.
- Sheriff Les Snow, who helped convict Tom Horn of murder, carried a 4-inch barreled M1878 that is on display at the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center.

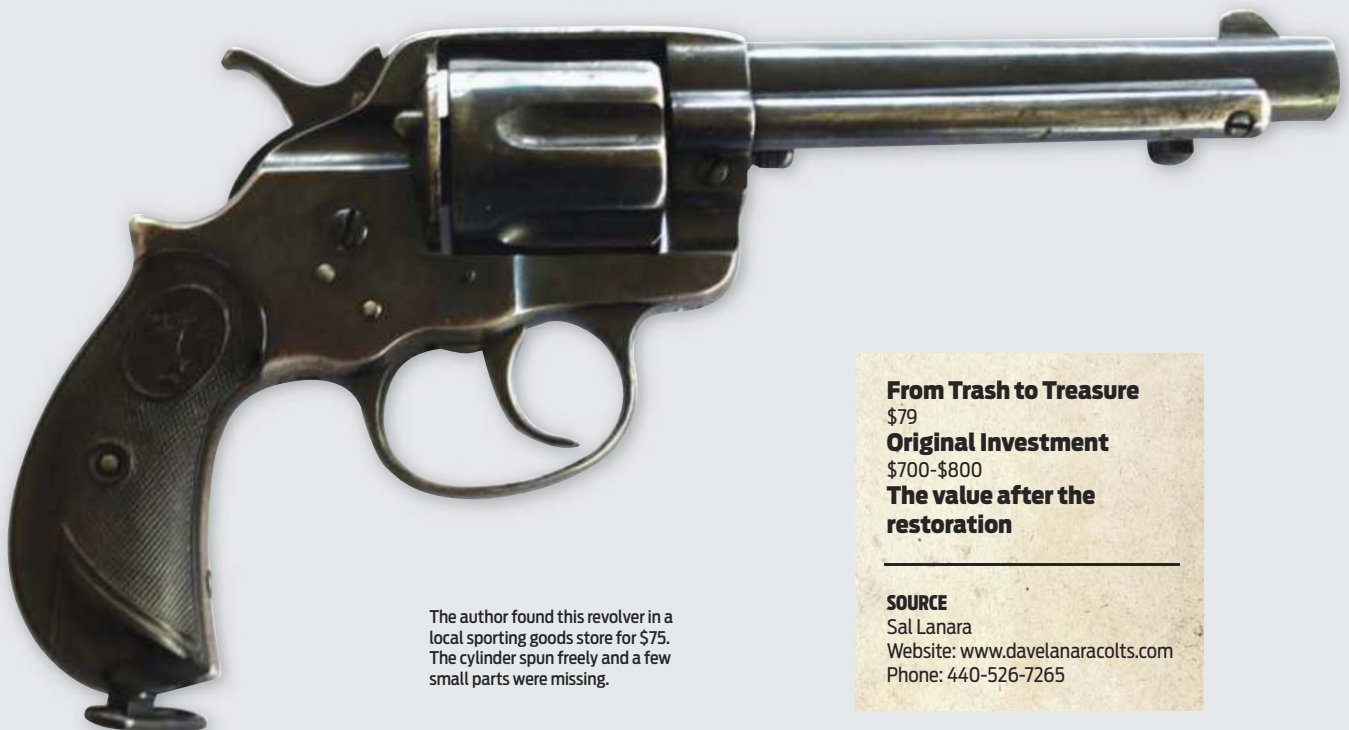
NICE INVESTMENT

The M1878 nicely filled a void in my collection of revolvers. It was the largest double action revolver manufactured by Colt until the introduction of the New Service nearly three decades later. Snagging a piece like this for under \$100 despite investing nearly four times that amount to bring it back to shooter grade is always something to write home about.

It cannot be used in Cowboy Action Shooting matches, despite

being more historically accurate than a modern single action with a transfer bar, and its age keeps it from working as a carry gun or shooter without the use of light black powder loads. So a lifetime in the safe next to some of its peers manufactured by Colt, Smith & Wesson and Merwin Hulbert will be its fate.

Maybe someday I'll find out if those six notches mean anything beyond the markings of a 9-year-old boy thinking he was Johnny Ringo back in the 1950s. **GNSL**



The author found this revolver in a local sporting goods store for \$75. The cylinder spun freely and a few small parts were missing.

From Trash to Treasure

\$79

Original Investment

\$700-\$800

The value after the restoration

SOURCE

Sal Lanara

Website: www.davelanaracolts.com

Phone: 440-526-7265



DIRECTIONS FOR USE.—Raise the barrel catch to its place, when the arm is ready for use.

To Eject the Empty Cartridge Cases.—Grasp the catch with the thumb of the right hand, and with the right hand turn the breech of the barrel and cylinder downward, and with the right hand turn the ejector returns to its place, when the arm is in condition for use.

To Remove an Exploded Shell.—Open the arm sufficiently to allow the ejector to return to its place, again, and the arm is ready for use.

To Remove the Cylinder and Ejector.—Open the arm and turn the cylinder two turns to the right.

To Replace the Cylinder and Ejector.—Turn the cylinder forward upon the base pin and give it two turns to the right.

The Cartridges for these pistols are .38 Smith & Wesson.

In ordering parts for these pistols, specify the model.

This pistol has been tested and found to be reliable.

TOP-BREAK BACKUPS

**CITIZENS WEREN'T LOOKING FOR TROUBLE,
BUT THESE GUNS ENSURED THEY WERE
PREPARED FOR IT**

full hight, and tip the barrel forward as far as it will go.
its place, being sure to have the barrel catch down to its
the thumb and forefinger of the left hand, holding the
t hand carry forward the lock frame and stock of the arm
tion to reload.

s...tridges out a little, then close it again suffi-
the other charge home, close

the barrel catch
cylinder for-
timers.

SSON, Spring

This Smith & Wesson
Model 11/2 in .32 S&W, made
sometime between 1878
and 1892, sold recently
through Rock Island
Auction Co. for \$1,265.
(Rock Island Auction photo)

BY JIM DICKSON

While most focus on the glamour guns of the Old West, such as the Colt Single Action Army, other important players escaped the attention.

The top-break revolvers in .32S&W, .32 Long and .38S&W calibers, with their compact five-shot cylinders, were important firearms of the era. Not only were

these carried as discreet back-up guns to the big .45s, but they were also the primary carry gun for many people of the day. These people were not expecting trouble, but were prepared for whatever.

The small pocket pistol was the weapon of choice for the average man and woman because they were relatively inexpensive, light and easy to carry concealed in a pocket.



This Smith & Wesson Safety Hammerless, made in 1887, was known as the Lemon Squeezer because of its grip safety. It sold at auction recently for \$1,265. (Rock Island Auction photo)



This view of the left side of the same Smith & Wesson shows the detailed engraving. The barrel and frame were nickel-finished, while the cylinder and trigger guard were blued. (Rock Island Auction photo)



**“These guns
were not
man-stoppers,
but bullet wounds
tended to be
fatal on
the frontier ...”**

NOT THE MOST POWERFUL

These guns were not man-stoppers, but bullet wounds tended to be fatal on the frontier where doctors were scarce and treatment for gunshot wounds was primitive when you did find a doctor.

These guns were very user friendly. They were pleasant to shoot, had virtually no recoil and were easy to place hits. A man usually had to place his little finger under the butt when firing because of the small grip, but that also aided in accurate pointing of these little guns.

THE TOP-BREAK GUNS

Though all types of small cheap revolvers found a ready market, the top-break guns were the most desired. They eject faster than the modern swing-out cylinder guns and without any chance of an empty case ending up behind the extractor.

The little .32 S&W actually has twice the stopping power of a .22 LR and, being a centerfire, it is much more reliable in its ignition. Many people, then and now, don't like a .22 for defense because of the higher rate of misfires you get with rimfire ammunition.

The .32 S&W was long a favorite of trappers for dispatching the game in their traps. The little .32 S&W was made in some very tiny top-breaks, which added greatly to their appeal. You would hardly know you were carrying one, and they were so easy to conceal.

The .32 Long offered a little more power, but most folks made the jump to the .38 S&W. This was a fairly potent little number, but like all .38s, it's not a man-stopper. When the .38 S&W's failings got too much publicity, they upped the power again with the .38 Special.

The .38 S&W was never designed as a man-stopper, though. It found its niche as the successor to the less powerful .36 caliber of the cap and ball Colt M1851 Navy revolver. Because everyone was familiar with this gun's performance, and the .38 S&W was actually a bit more powerful, there were no surprises.

Men expecting to need more power simply bought a .45. Because fanatical attackers requiring

MADE FOR POINT SHOOTING

It is important to remember that these men knew that a pistol was meant to be pointed in a gunfight, not aimed. The time it took to get that sight picture was time spent by your opponent in plugging you.

The sights were rudimentary, at best, because they were only there to help you find out where the new pistol was pointing when you first took it out shooting. Point shooting was much more accurate than using sights on these little guns.

a true man-stopper cartridge were in short supply and these guns were mostly carried “just in case,” the .38 S&W became one of the most popular cartridges out there.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

For this article several of these guns were put through their paces. The petite .32 S&W had already seen so much use that its rifling was almost completely gone. However, it still proved adequate for normal gun-fighting ranges on a man-sized target.

Three .38 S&W guns were fired. An S&W Baby Russian single action with spur trigger that had seen an awful lot of use still shot well and turned in groups less than 2 inches at 25 yards.

An almost new S&W double action and a fine Iver Johnson Owl-head pistol filled out the list. Both double action revolvers were very accurate and controllable in fast double action fire.

I fired 200 rounds of ammunition consisting of 100 rounds of Winchester .38 S&W 148-grain lead round nosed and 100 rounds of Winchester .32 S&W 85-grain lead round nosed ammo. All of the .38s easily kept their shots in the kill zone of a man-sized silhouette target at 75 yards.



Smith & Wesson top-break revolvers, such as this Safety Hammerless, were popular because they were easier to conceal. (Steven Barlow photo)

PERILS OF FIRING FROM A POCKET

Firing a gun while it was still in the pocket had its own perils. There were cases of the pocket catching on fire from the muzzle blast. A bigger threat was the fire from the barrel/cylinder gap. This cuts through cloth and hides like an acetylene torch, and woe to the man who does not push the pocket out away from his body before he fires. The aftermath is a pocket reduced to rags and three equal sized holes, one on each side of the barrel cylinder gap and one at the muzzle. All this doesn't change the fact that firing through the pocket is sometimes a tactical advantage.



Loading the top-break .38 S&W Baby Russian revolver is so easy that no one can goof it up. (Author photo)

“All of the .38s easily kept their shots in the kill zone of a man-sized silhouette target at 75 yards.”

The little .32, with its worn-out rifling, did fine at across-the-room ranges. In its day, it would have been fine at 75 yards, but that was countless firings ago, back in the days when its rifling was deep enough to work.

Afterwards, the guns were cleaned with Shooter's Choice bore cleaner followed by the com-



These small revolvers weren't very powerful, but they were easy to carry and have available "just in case." (Steven Barlow photo)

pany's lead remover. A coating of its FP-10 gun oil finished the job. It was easy to remove the compact five-shot cylinders from these guns by holding the stirrup latch half open and rotating the cylinder in the opposite direction the gun turns it. It made cleaning easier. This was particularly important in the days of black powder and corrosive primers when hot soapy water cleaning was the order of the day.

SERVED THEIR PURPOSE

Like the Colt SAA, these guns fulfill their intended purpose just as well today as they ever did. If you have one, there is no reason not to use it. I find them much more effective than the subcompact polymer frame double action only .32s and .380s popular today because they are so much easier to shoot well. Newer is not always better. **GNSL**

WHY POCKET PISTOLS WERE CARRIED

Pocket pistols were carried for a number of possible threats. The toll they took of chicken-thieving coyotes and foxes is a matter of common knowledge—but they also took a toll they took on two-legged chicken thieves. Up until the 1920s, it was still legal to kill a chicken thief in many states because those chickens were all some folks had to live on.

The tramps and hobos of the day had taking ways. Clothes on the clothesline and anything else could vanish when they were afoot, hence the name "Tramp's Terror" for one early pocket pistol. Many a housewife defended her wash with a hastily drawn pocket pistol in those days.

They usually didn't have to shoot, but the thieves had to believe that they would if need be. In truth, those who would not were few and far between. In those days, the law recognized your God given right to defend your property.

Muggers in the big cities were more dangerous back then and often used brass knuckles to kill or seriously injure their victims before they could cry out. Garroting the victim was also popular. A hand on a gun carried in the pocket was a good idea.

Another bit of advice was to not let anyone have a chance to get too close and distract you to set you up. An old joke of the day was about the mugger who asked his would-be victim for the time. The mark promptly punched him in the face and declared, "It has just struck one!"

Along the coastal areas being Shanghaied was a threat. The crimps filled the ships with crews that they had pinched and it was off on a slow boat to China. While skid row bums and drunken sailors were the common prey, it was not unknown for cops and respectable citizens to be grabbed. This practice did not die out until World War II in many ports.

This is why the Navy Shore patrols often were armed like they were going into combat in these areas. Any attempt at more normal policing would have resulted in the Shore patrol being Shanghaied. Up until World War II, there were ports where the police would not enter "Sailor Town" after dark even if a murder was reported. You went armed and in groups if you had business there and you wanted a safe return.

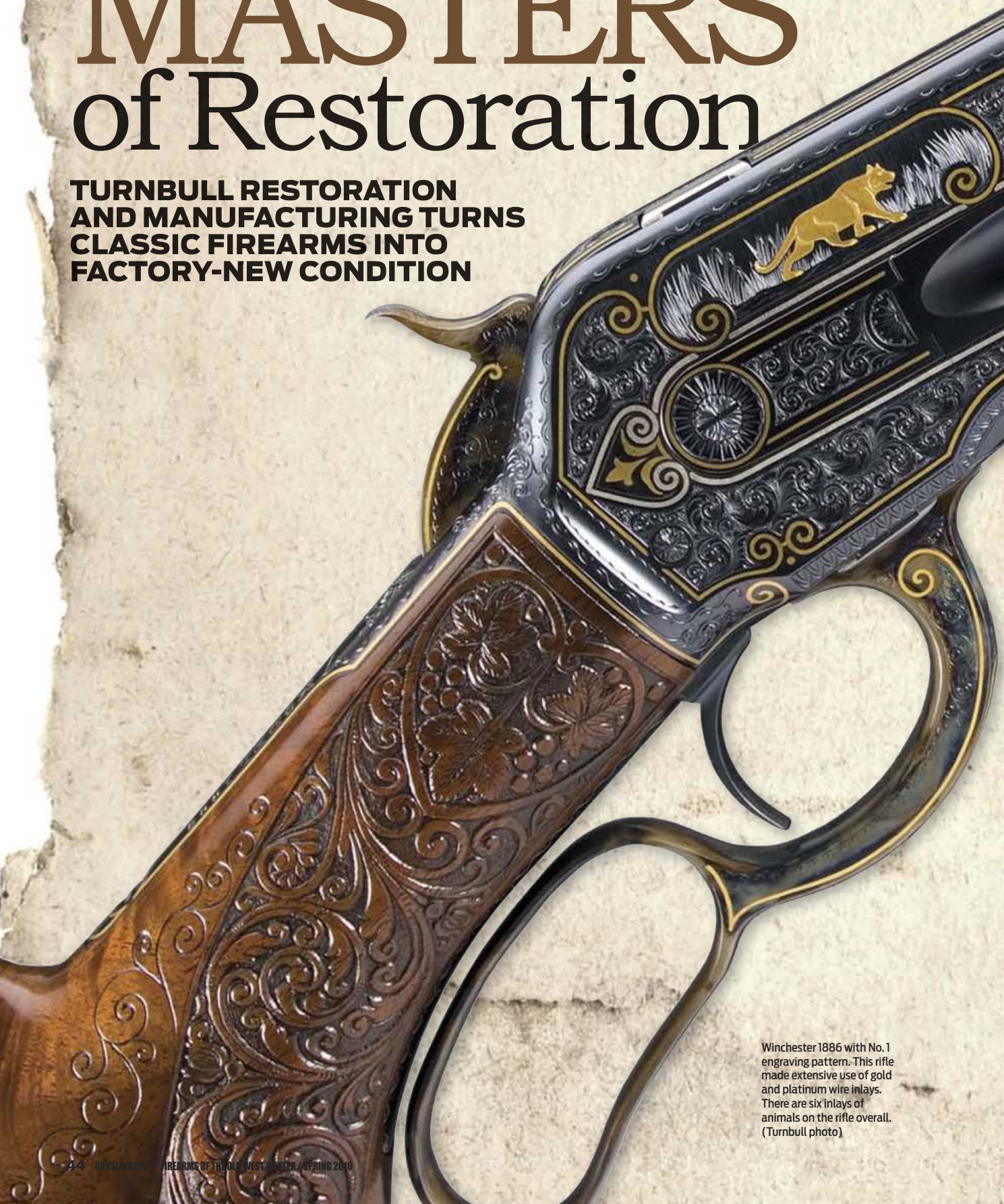
The cowboys often carried these pistols discretely concealed as a back-up gun just as many carry a back-up gun today. They were not really suitable as a primary gun for a cowboy because if you get thrown from a bucking horse and your high heeled cowboy boot gets caught in the stirrup you need a .45 Colt to bring the horse down before he drags you to death.

The little guns were always popular with the lawmen and there are even instances of them being carried as the main gun, although this was rare.

Railroad men often couldn't live without them. The railroad might require you to be out at all hours of the night and at 3:00 a.m., some of the drunks you might encounter are the mean drunks. Producing a pistol generally sobered them up enough to prevent things from getting out of hand. There were also burglars out at that hour, and many of them wouldn't hesitate to rob a man they ran across.

MASTERS of Restoration

**TURNBULL RESTORATION
AND MANUFACTURING TURNS
CLASSIC FIREARMS INTO
FACTORY-NEW CONDITION**



Winchester 1886 with No. 1 engraving pattern. This rifle made extensive use of gold and platinum wire inlays. There are six inlays of animals on the rifle overall. (Turnbull photo)



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY STEVEN PAUL BARLOW

What if you could take that beat-up, worn-out classic Old West firearm and restore it to the way it looked and functioned the day it left the factory? Or what about this: What if you could take a new gun and give it the Old West treatment to make it look like one of those exquisitely finished and handcrafted guns of the 19th century?

You can't simply wave a wizard's wand to make those wishes come true. But the hard work and artistry among the expert craftsmen at Turnbull Restoration and Manufacturing Company make those things happen like magic every day.



Doug Turnbull has restored many old Winchesters. Now he uses newly manufactured Winchesters as the basis for his own custom rifles in .475 Turnbull.



“When I stepped into the lobby of the Turnbull plant in Bloomfield, New York, I felt as if I had walked into Teddy Roosevelt’s game room.”



Doug Turnbull holds a Winchester saddle carbine that is awaiting restoration. Old Winchesters are a staple of Turnbull’s business.

THE MAN HIMSELF

When I stepped into the lobby of the Turnbull plant in Bloomfield, New York, I felt as if I had walked into Teddy Roosevelt’s game room. There were trophy mounts of countless big game animals, me-

mentoes of hunting expeditions around the world. And there were guns, a veritable museum of them, with rich finishes and superb wooden stocks.

When owner Doug Turnbull greeted me, he looked me straight

in the eye. He was wiry and bearded and had he been wearing buckskins, I might have mistaken him for a 19th century buffalo hunter. Perhaps he would have preferred that life in those times.

We sat down to talk about his company. He was cautious at first, as if we were sitting at a poker table in a Dodge City saloon. He didn’t want to reveal all his cards. But soon we were talking as if we were old hunting buddies exchanging yarns.

His company is widely considered the premier source for restoring Old West firearms, focusing on those manufactured between 1873 and into the 1940s, especially Winchester rifles and American side-by-side shotguns sporting such iconic names as Parker, L.C. Smith and Fox.

Restoring old guns and embellishing new ones in the Old West style with color case hardened finishes aren’t the company’s only pursuits. The company also makes and markets its own firearms, including Model 1886 lever actions in a new hard-hitting dangerous game cartridge and high-end 1911 pistols. The company has built more than 1,500 firearms and has



Turnbull offers restorations of Winchester 1886 rifles as well as new production custom versions of the famed gun in their proprietary .475 Turnbull caliber. (Turnbull photo)

SHOOT IT, RESTORE IT, COLLECT IT

Although the company also makes some new guns, Turnbull's specialty continues to be restoring old firearms. You can send your old gun to the company for a free estimate that you'll receive within two weeks. You then have a month to ponder the quote. If you decide not to have the work done, you pay only for return shipping.

But how do you determine whether it's worth it to restore an old gun?

"First you have to determine if it's safe to shoot, mechanically and operationally, that everything is working right and proper, that the bore is not overly pitted and the headspace and the cylinder gaps are within tolerances," Turnbull said.

Next you have to decide if it has collectible value that will be maintained if you keep it in original condition without alterations or refinishing.

"For the collectability, you have to ask what percentage of the original finish is on it," he said. "What's the rarity? Who owned it? Can you date it to somebody famous or a famous event? If you can tie it to a famous person or event, then you've got to leave it as-is, even though it's old and rusted and pitted and worn out. It is what it is and there's a history."

With a family heirloom, as long as it's mechanically sound and can be repaired, it comes down to a family decision on whether or not to restore it.

"Many times the family wants to bring it back to the way grandpa had it and how it looked back in the late 1800s or early 1900s," he said. "In a family heirloom restoration, they'll probably put more money into it than it's going to be worth on the other end."

Eventually, however, even restorations tend to appreciate in value.

"Back in the early 2000s, we would do a restoration on a gun and buy it back three years later for what they had in it and then sell it for more money," he said. "So in a three-year period at that time they were appreciating substantially."

From Turnbull's side of things, there are considerations as well.

"When we look at it, we have to determine what it's going to take to bring the gun back to the way it looked originally. We have to see what parts we would have to outsource and potentially replace, what we'd have to rebuild, what sort of stampings we'd have to reproduce and whether or not we have the stamps and rolls already."

restored or repaired more than 50,000.

Turnbull has managed the enviable feat of turning his passion into a life-long career. And it all began from humble beginnings in the family-owned gun shop.

HOW IT ALL STARTED

Turnbull started his restoration company in 1983, but the story begins much earlier than that.

Growing up, he worked in the family business, Creekside Gun Shop, a mecca for firearms enthusiasts throughout central New York and northern Pennsylvania.

But young Doug found that it wasn't retail sales that piqued his interest, but sprucing up old guns that came into the shop.

"I enjoyed that a lot more," he said. "It was more hands-on. My father was experimenting with



Here is an Ithaca Sousa Grade single barrel trap shotgun. (Turnbull photo)



Doug Turnbull holds two old Colts, including a Bisley model on the right, that are in his shop for restoration work. Each firearm is tagged with a work order that stays with it as it continues through the restoration process.

bone charcoal color case hardening throughout the 1960s and 1970s. We took what he had learned and refined it to where we had become able to reproduce the various styles of colors whether it's the real flowing electric colors of the Parkers or the more mottled colors of the Winchesters and Colts and L.C. Smiths."

As the company grew and Turnbull added employees, he was careful not to stray too far from their expertise.

"When we first started, we did an awful lot of Winchester Model 1886 and 1876 rifles and American side-by-side shotguns of that era," he said. "As we got busier, we'd maybe pick up an English gun here and there."

The company also took in

some single action revolvers as well as some Marlin and pump action Colts rifles.

"The mindset has always been to restore things properly, so we try to focus on what we were good at. We stay away from the Remington 1100s and 870s and the bolt action rifles, even the early Model 70s."

Over time, Turnbull worked with a lot of dealers and collectors who instructed him on how to improve his work and pay attention to detail, especially when it came to such things as the polish and the polish direction.

"We started working with engravers to re-cut engraving and touch up lettering. We got stamps to deepen markings and refresh them," he said.

Now metal engraving and re-

THE TURNBULL 1911

Another newly manufactured gun Turnbull is turning out these days is a high-end 1911 pistol. These don't use an existing base gun. They are built from scratch, 100 percent in the U.S., with forged frames and slides.

These new pistols are of the original 1911 design, much as Colt made them following World War I. There are options with such things as finish, grips and sights. Again, for Turnbull, the difference is in the details.

"You can machine anything you want, but then it's the fitting of those parts and the polishing. We're taking the restoration side and that attention to detail and putting it into the new manufacturing so we're morphing the best of both worlds together and building something that looks like you could have bought in the 1920s."

The standard World War I gun is under \$3,000. Highly engraved "barbecue" models with special finishes can run as much as \$5,000 to \$5,500.

stocking and checkering are done in-house. They only send work out when something special is required.

TURNBULL'S CUSTOMERS

Turnbull's services don't come cheaply because of all the work that must be done by hand. So just who are the people who hire Turnbull to provide them with one-of-a-kind firearms?

"A typical customer is a 50- to 70-year-old male who owns 50 or more guns," he said. "They know what they want. They're collecting them, but also with the idea of using them."

Sometimes when Turnbull turns over the finished restoration to a customer, the complaint is that the gun is now just too pretty.

"That's the problem," he said. "If you take a used gun and restore it back to brand new, you're afraid to use it."

But he stressed that his guns are intended to be used and enjoyed.

"Someone once wrote that 'life's too short to hunt with an ugly gun,'" he said. "You can't be afraid to scratch it. Scratches are the memories. It's just like the notches in stocks of old guns. If only those notches could talk."

OTHER COMPANIES COME CALLING

It's not only individuals who seek Turnbull's expertise. Sometimes other firearms companies approach Turnbull about doing his now famous color case hardened finishes on their special runs of guns.

"We did 2,500 pieces for Marlin with their Century Limited series around 1993-94," he said. The company did another 4,000 pieces for Smith & Wesson's Heritage series.

CUSTOM 1886:

NEW POWER FOR AN OLD FAVORITE

How would you like to hunt with one of the most beautiful guns on Earth, one that has an Old West heritage, but fires a modern, hard-hitting cartridge that is capable of taking down any animal on the planet?

"We were doing a lot with the Winchester 1886, building a lot of custom guns from original Winchesters," Turnbull said. "Finally, we thought, why not build one that fires our own cartridge?"

As the company worked on cartridge development, they settled on the .475 caliber as there were lots of different bullets available. The overall cartridge length had to be suitable for the Model 1886.

The result was the .475 Turnbull that fires a 400-grain bullet at about 2,050 fps. Turnbull collaborated with Barnes Bullets to develop that TSX copper bullet especially for the new cartridge. The cartridge is SAAMI approved. Not only does Turnbull make its new custom Model 1886 in this cartridge, but Ruger has chambered its No. 1 single-shot rifle for it too.

"It's taken everything from prairie dogs to elephants and one white rhino," Turnbull said. "Because it's a big bullet going slow, it makes a big hole, but doesn't destroy as much meat as a small, fast bullet."

These new Winchester reproductions are also available from Turnbull in .45-70, .45-90 (2.8-inch OAL) and .50-100.



Pretty parts. Color case hardened parts of a Winchester 1873 await reassembly. The parts are part of the contract work Turnbull does for Navy Arms.



AR-15s in the Old West? Hardly. In addition to the company's work on vintage firearms, Turnbull also manufactures new firearms, including these ARs with color case hardened steel receivers.



Turnbull employee Ryan Power works on the checkering of a Parker shotgun fore-end.



The newly manufactured Turnbull 1911 Heritage pistol is top quality, the result of Turnbull's insistence on the same attention to detail that he uses with his restorations. (Turnbull photo)

“...the .475 Turnbull...fires a 400-grain bullet at about 2,050 fps.”

“We worked with Colt in buying original current single actions in the white and then redoing them, enlarging the flutes, detailing the polish and really making the third generation guns look like first gen-

eration guns, what we call the pre-war series,” Turnbull said.

Sometimes it's difficult to tell the difference, he said, between an old gun that he's restored and a new gun that's been given the “old”

treatment. Currently, Turnbull is doing the color case hardened finishes on the Navy Arms Model 1873s.

MAKING NEW GUNS

With the many successes he's had, Turnbull was able to move his company in 1998 to its current 13,000-square-foot facility. He started doing manufactured runs of his own firearms, including Model 1886 rifles chambered for his own cartridge, the .475 Turnbull, and 1911 pistols. He even makes a modern AR platform rifle with a steel, color case hardened receiver.

NEW LOVE FOR OLD GUNS

“The interest in the old guns is probably as great or more today



This highly engraved Winchester Model 1886 in .50-110 with a 16-inch barrel is an example of Turnbull's work. This gun is on display in his company's lobby. It's for sale, if you're interested, for \$29,995.

than it was in the old days," Turnbull said. "I think there are more collectors, but there are also more people using the old stuff. They remember their fathers or grandfathers using the old side-by-sides, so they want to do it. It's the hunting experience that's important to them."

As Turnbull continues to turn out these wonderful restorations, more and more shooters will enjoy those experiences just a little bit more with firearms that are truly one-of-a-kind. **GNSL**

CONTACT INFORMATION
Turnbull Restoration and
Manufacturing Co.
www.turnbullmfg.com

SINGING THE BLUES

Turnbull's reputation was built on his expertise with specialty firearms finishes. Here's a rundown of some of them.

COLOR CASE HARDENING

The color case hardening process, also known as the bone charcoal packing process, was actually a metal heat-treating process used in the days of the Old West to give the low carbon steels some strength and durability. A by-product of that heat-treating process is that it leaves the metal with a hard surface and beautiful layer of multi-colored carbon.

"They're snowflakes," said Turnbull of the guns with this finish. "Every gun is different. I can control the color style, but I can't control the patterns."

The biggest challenge for Turnbull with this process was learning how to deal with modern steels.

RUST BLUING

Rust bluing produces a blue-black finish. It's actually a controlled rusting process. Chemicals are applied to the metal and the parts are later boiled in water. Repeating the process, together with a lot of polishing creates a deep blue. This was the process that had to be used on early shotguns, as other processes could harm the soft soldering that held the barrels together.

CHARCOAL BLUING

Charcoal bluing is also known as carbona bluing. The shade of the finish depends on the degree of polish of the underlying metal. High-gloss, durable mirror finishes are possible with this process. Colt's famous Royal Blue was the result of charcoal bluing.

NITRE BLUING

Nitre bluing results in a bright spring blue color, but it's not always durable. It's used often on screws and pins that aren't subject to lots of wear.



Doug Turnbull moved his company into this building in Bloomfield, New York, in 1998, which greatly increased his manufacturing capabilities.



The lobby of Turnbull Restoration and Manufacturing is like a museum of fine old firearms and hunting memorabilia.

Cap And Ball

101

**THE WORLD OF
CAP-AND-BALL
REVOLVERS
HAS NEVER BEEN
EASIER—OR
CLEANER**



Uberti 1860 Colt
Army replica.



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JERRY CATANIA

Let me be honest. Prior to doing these reviews, I was a little intimidated by the loading, the firing and especially the cleaning of cap-and-ball revolvers. Why? Before electing to write this article, I had never fired a cap-and-ball revolver. After a little research to help me get going—and some hands-on experience—I discovered cap-and-ball shooting is fun.

The guns I tested were two Italian-made Uberti replicas of a Colt 1860 Army and a Remington 1858 New Army. Both were outstanding.



Loading a Pyrodex pellet by simply dropping it into the chamber. The author found the pellets the easiest propellants to use.

BLACK POWDER VS. PYRODEX

It was my intention to shoot these revolvers with both black powder and Pyrodex. But I soon eliminated black powder for the following reasons: First, the closest place that sold it was more than 30 miles away; second, some type of federal forms had to be filled out to purchase it, and I hate federal forms.

Pyrodex “P”—the one made for revolvers—was easily available for less than \$17.00 per pound and so were Pyrodex pellets. These pellets are made for the .44 caliber guns only and come in one size, 30 grains, which is a typical load for both the Colt 1860 and Remington 1858.

These Pellets proved to be the way to go, at least for me. They loaded easily and quickly without

weighing, pouring or spilling. Loading in the wind made me a real believer in the pellets.

Just drop in one pellet, seat a lubed wad of the proper size for .44 caliber revolvers over it and ram a lead ball on top of the wad. Add a Dynamit Nobel #1075 Percussion cap (they look like a pistol primer) on the nipple and you are ready to shoot.

Tech note for novices: A nipple is one of the six small metal protrusions on the back of the cylinder that the #1075 percussion cap fits over and is struck by the hammer fall to ignite the powder charge.

With the loose Pyrodex P, I had to pour the powder from the flask into the pre-set powder measure (30 grains) and then pour the powder into the chamber. This entailed an extra step and one that was a little messier.

I also noticed that when the wind was blowing, some of the powder blew here and there, including into the adjacent chamber. More on this later.

Again, for the novice, even though the designation of the Pyrodex is in grains, it is not a unit of weight, but a unit of volume. Make sure you only use an appropriate powder measure to charge your Six Gun. Never try to weigh the charges; it won't work.

THE GUNS

Most people don't realize that the era of the gunfighter was actually ushered in by the Civil War cap-and-ball revolvers, not the famous Colt Single Action Army (SAA) of 1873. Wild Bill Hickock and John Wesley Hardin used Colt Navy and Army models well after the SAA was in every day use.



You should seat a wad to seal the pellet.

Buffalo Bill carried an 1858 Remington New Army into the 20th century as well. Why? They worked.

Uberti's 1860 Colt Army replica features a forged steel frame with brass back strap and trigger guard. It is true to the original in virtually every detail and probably a lot stronger. Quality is impeccable.

The 1860 balanced nicely; better than the Remington in my opinion. I really liked the sights, too, which consisted of a low, roundish front sight and a V-notch in the hammer for the rear sight.

The grip is similar to the Colt 1873 but quite a bit longer and really comfortable. The upswept hammer made thumb-cocking or cocking with the non-shooting hand easy. Loading the lead balls was a little tight for big fingers, but

the cutout for capping the nipples was generous, making that critical job rather smooth. It shot to point of aim with 30 grains of Pyrodex (or a Pellet) and the Hornady 140-grain (.454) lead ball.

The original 1860 Army was made during the Civil War by Colt's Manufacturing Company. The frame was the same size as the 1851 Navy but the grip was longer. The most widely used revolver of the Civil War, more than 200,000 were manufactured from 1860 through 1873. Colt's biggest customer was the U.S. Government, with no less than 129,730 units being purchased and issued to the troops.

When the Colt Model 1860 was used by 19th Century soldiers, they most often loaded the gun using paper cartridges. These cartridges consisted of a pre-measured

LOADING PROCEDURES CAN AFFECT VELOCITIES

An interesting phenomenon occurred with Pyrodex pellets during my testing, and it was revealed by my Oehler 35P Professional Chronograph. The muzzle velocities (and the extreme spread of the velocities) were seriously affected by how hard I pressed the lead ball on top of the Pellet. This did not happen with the loose Pyrodex "P;" only the Pellets.

Note: The extreme spreads were, well, extreme when not enough pressure was used to seat the ball. Of course, firm and heavy are relative terms, but I would advise really ramming the lead ball hard onto the pellet for best results.

sured load of black powder and a ball, which were wrapped in flammable, nitrated paper. To load each chamber, one only had to slip the cartridge into the front of the chamber and seat the ball with the loading lever, cap the nipple, and shoot.

Uberti's 1858 New Army replica also has a forged steel frame as well as a steel grip frame.

Only the trigger guard is brass. The original "New Army" Remington was actually brought out in 1863 after a couple of design improvements.

When Sam Colt died in 1862 and the Colt factory burned down in 1864, production of the Colt Army model ceased until after the war and the army bought the Remingtons for use in the Civil War. The Remington has a solid top strap, making it considerably stronger than the Colt 1860.

Another advantage is that the cylinder is much easier to remove by just lowering the loading lever and pulling the base pin straight out. The rear sight is a notch in the top strap and the front sight is a tall, rather skinny blade that I found hard to see. It did, however,

shoot to point of aim with the .454 caliber, 140-grain Hornady lead balls and 30 grains of Pyrodex "P" or a Pyrodex Pellet.

The grip is smaller than on the Colt Army and I found it to be a little less comfortable.

LOADING AND SHOOTING

After cleaning the factory preservative from the guns, I took them out to the desert for some shooting to continue my education. First, I fired a percussion cap over an empty chamber per the Uberti manual's instructions (and conventional wisdom) to rid the nipple of any residual grease, oil or preservative.

Having never experienced it before, watching the explosion from the caps was an exciting

THE CHAIN FIRE

Probably the biggest fear factor (at least for me) of shooting cap-and-ball revolvers: the chain fire.

A chain fire can occur when the pistol is fired and the blast ignites one or more of the adjacent loaded chambers, and it's a very bad thing. The cause of chain fires has traditionally been believed to be lead balls that did not fit tightly enough. (A bit of lead should be shaved off of the circumference of a proper fitting lead ball when rammed into the chamber.)

However, John Fuhring believes a chain fire is caused by inadvertently spilling powder grains into an already loaded chamber. He may be right, as I noticed how easy this was to do under field conditions.

Be that as it may, sealing the chamber over the ball with a commercial grease or Crisco (never use Vaseline or other petroleum-based products; they will gum up the works) goes a long way to alleviate this concern, as does a lubed wad between the ball and the powder. Better still, use Pyrodex Pellets. They eliminate the possibility of spilled powder completely and make reloading much faster. As far as putting grease over the balls versus using lubed wads, I would only do that if I ran out of wads.

Using loose Pyrodex, you have to pour it from a flask into pre-set powder measure and then pour the measured charge into the revolver chamber.



CHRONOGRAPH RESULTS (in feet per second)

Pyrodex pellets and firm seating pressure

MODEL	MUZZLE	VELOCITY	HIGH	LOW EXTREME SPREAD
1860	ARMY	806	896	664 237
1858	NEW ARMY	840	963	608 358

Pyrodex pellets and heavy seating pressure

MODEL	MUZZLE	VELOCITY	HIGH	LOW EXTREME SPREAD
1860	ARMY	998	1025	939 86
1858	NEW ARMY	1073	1095	1014 81

Pyrodex "P" And Firm Or Heavy Pressure

MODEL	MUZZLE	VELOCITY	HIGH	LOW EXTREME SPREAD
1860	ARMY	820	831	812 19
1858	NEW ARMY	875	885	863 22

LEGEND: Data provided by an Oehler 35P Professional Chronograph with start screen set 6 feet from muzzle. Muzzle velocities are the average of several six-shot strings. Altitude: 2,200 feet. Temp: 87 degrees F.



The final step with either revolver is capping the nipples. Make sure gun is pointed down range for this step. The revolver is now ready to fire.



Both revolvers stripped for cleaning. The 1858 Remington's barrel is fixed in the solid frame.

GUN SPECS

Name: Uberti 1860 Army Revolver (Colt replica-340400)

Type: Muzzle-loading

Powder: Black powder or Pyrodex

Weight: 2.6 pounds

OAL: 13.8 inches

Barrel Length and Type: 8 inches, round, 7-grooves, LH twist

Capacity: 6

Design: Forged steel, open-top frame

Caliber: .44 (shoots .454 lead ball)

Grips: One-piece walnut

MSRP: \$369

Name: Uberti 1858 New Army Revolver (Remington replica-341000)

Type: Muzzle-loading

Powder: Black powder or Pyrodex

Weight: 2.7 pounds

OAL: 13.6 inches

Barrel Length and Type: 8 inches, octagonal, 7-grooves, LH twist

Capacity: 6

Design: Forged steel, solid frame

Caliber: .44 (shoots .454 lead ball)

Grips: Two-piece walnut

MSRP: \$369

event for me and my 11-year-old daughter Eliza, who helped with the loading and shooting for this project.

The first thing I noticed was that long, slender fingers are much better for loading the guns than short, thick fingers. My Traditions revolver kit had a device that facilitated placing the caps onto the nipples, but I never did get the hang of using it. Loading it up was just as hard (if not harder) for me

First up were the Pyrodex Pellets. I squeezed the trigger. A cloud of smoke and a shower of sparks instantly followed the loud “boom” from the cap. Wow! My daughter and I were hooked.

The Pyrodex “P” loose powder loads took a little more

SHOOTING TIPS FROM THE WEB

First, let me say that I garnered a ton of information off the Internet and this proved very useful in giving me a head start on shooting these guns. Pyrodex, John Taffin, Uberti, Colt and a host of others all had good information, but John L. Fuhring provided the single best source on his website, www.geojohn.org/BlackPowder/bps1.html. He has pages and pages of detailed technical data and great advice. Whether you're a novice or an “old-timer,” his site is worth checking out.

doing. The adjustable measure—set for 30 grains—first had to be loaded from the flask before being poured into the chamber. Here is where the wind and human imperfection come into play. Spilling a bit of powder was easy to do. Some sort of a small funnel would seem to solve this problem for the most part.



The Traditions Revolver Shooter's Kit contains virtually everything you need to get started shooting and cleaning your cap-and-ball revolver. Just add an old toothbrush and dish detergent.

CLEANING THE GUNS

Even after firing only six rounds, these revolvers can get harder to cycle. As shooting progresses (24 rounds or so), they become inoperable. The only solution is to clean them.

John Taffin recommends the use of Windex with ammonia in the field to keep them going. I did not try this in the field, but I sprayed the guns with it before cleaning them in the traditional manner with soap and water. It cut through the fouling immediately, better than the commercial cleaner in my revolver kit. It was cheaper, too.

After soaking in hot water and dish detergent for a half hour, all

the fouling came off quickly and easily. I dried the barrels and cylinders with a hot hair dryer and sprayed them all over with WD-40. They never rusted.

By the way, the Windex/WD-40 treatment without the hot water worked perfectly for the actions, taking the fouling off and keeping them rust-free. Something to watch out for: When the caps explode, bits and pieces of them will find their way into the revolver's action and jam it up. Count on it. Pointing the gun skyward and shaking it will dislodge most pieces without picking them out. Be careful if you still have a few chambers loaded. The open-top design of the Colt 1860 was much

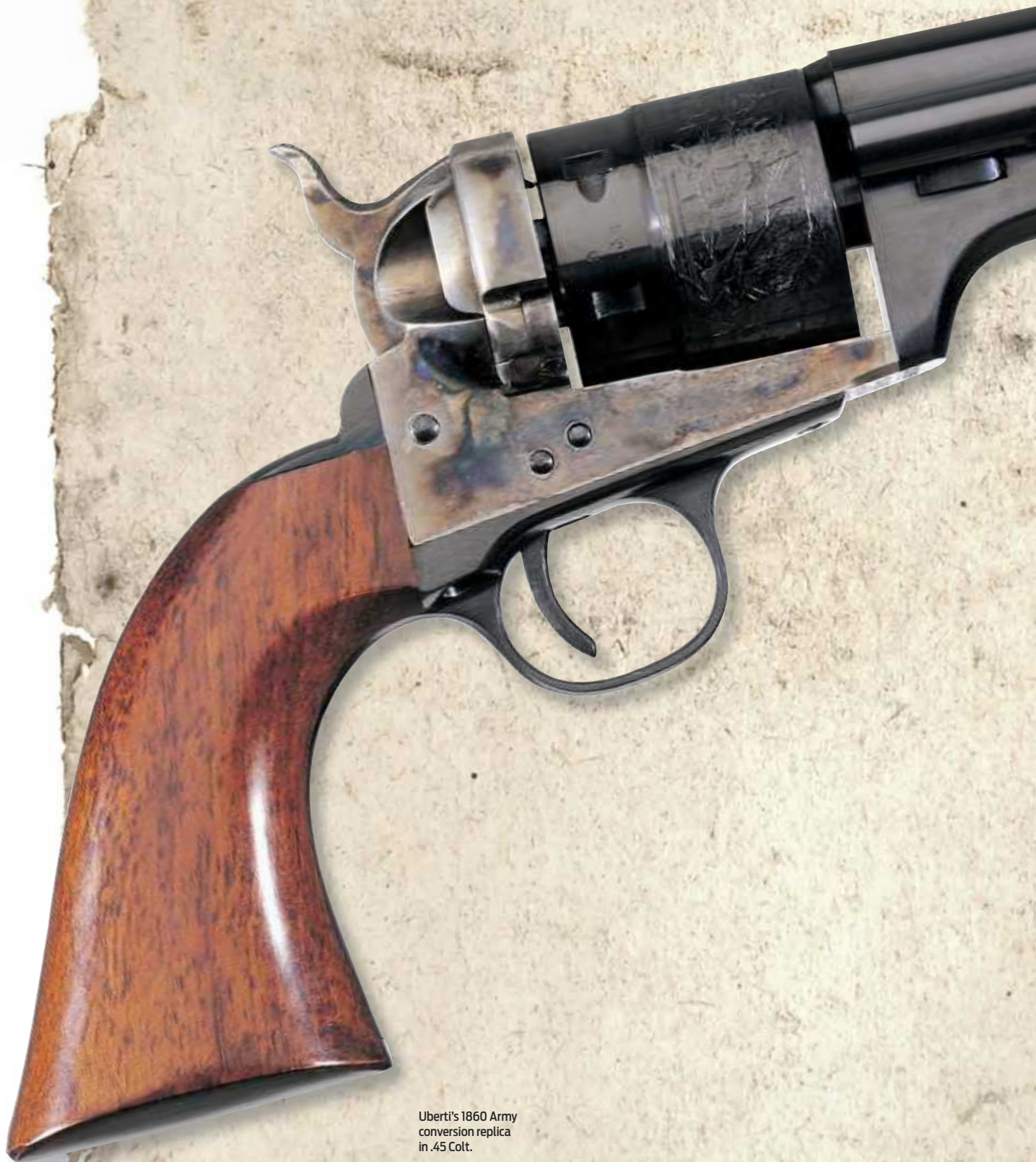
worse than the Remington 1858 in this regard. If fact, I can't remember the Uberti New Army getting tied up at all.

THE CHOICE

In short, the 1858 New Army would be my first choice. Either way: Have fun. And there's no reason to be intimidated. **GNLS**

SOURCES

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Pyrodex Powders: www.pyrodex.com
Traditions: www.traditionsfirearms.com
John Fuhring on shooting black powder revolvers: www.geojohn.org/BlackPowder/bps1.html



Uberti's 1860 Army
conversion replica
in .45 Colt.



OLD WEST UPGRADE

Cartridge conversion revolvers bridged the gap between the cap-and-ball era and modern handguns

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JERRY CATANIA

The advent of revolvers chambering metallic cartridges was a huge step in firearms development.

As the technology was taking hold, many of the existing old cap-and-ball designs were converted to accept the new cartridges. Here's how it happened.



The cylinder of the New Army is easily removed allowing fast replacement with a cartridge cylinder.

THE ROLLIN WHITE PATENT

Rollin White (June 6, 1817 – March 22, 1892) was an American gunsmith who invented a bored-through revolver cylinder that allowed metallic cartridges to be loaded from the rear of a revolver's cylinder.

White developed his idea while working at Colt's, during which time Colt granted White a contract to manufacture the lockwork of revolvers. White was granted a patent in 1855 for his "improvement in repeating firearms."

Samuel Colt—heavily invested in the cap-and-ball military revolvers—refused this innovation. White left Colt and went to Smith

THE SWITCH TO METALLIC CARTRIDGES

1855: Rollin White is granted a patent for bored-through revolver cylinders that allows for the loading of metallic cartridges

1857: Smith & Wesson uses its rights to the patent to introduce the Model 1 in .22 Short

1861: Charles Richards goes to work for Colt to design a way to convert 1860 Army cap and ball revolvers to cartridge guns

1866: William Mason leaves Remington for Colt and teams with Richards to build what will be known as Richards-Masons conversions

1868: Remington pays Smith & Wesson a royalty fee to use bored through cylinders and introduces its 5-shot New Army conversions in .46 Rimfire

1870: Rollin White patent expires

1871-72: Colt designs its first cartridge revolver, the Colt Open Top.

1873-1878: Colt continues to offer conversions for its old cap and ball revolvers

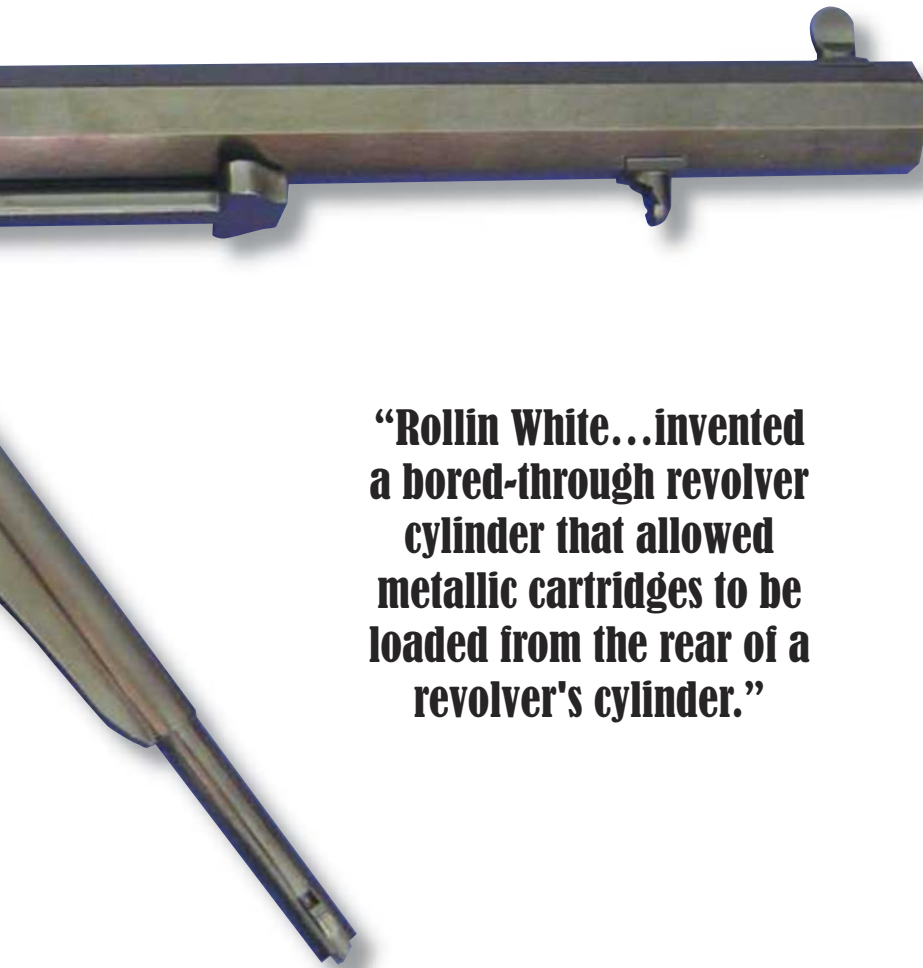
1873: Colt introduces a new cartridge revolver known as the Single Action Army

& Wesson to rent a license for his patent. This is how the S&W Model 1 in .22 Short saw light of day in 1857.

The next year, White signed an agreement granting Smith & Wesson the exclusive use of his patent, at a royalty rate of 25 cents for

every revolver. The patent did not expire until 1870.

The U.S. Army wanted a revolver that held metallic cartridges, but Colt could not produce them because the Rollin White patent was still held by rival Smith & Wesson.



“Rollin White...invented a bored-through revolver cylinder that allowed metallic cartridges to be loaded from the rear of a revolver's cylinder.”

COLT'S FIRST CONVERSIONS

Colt's only solution would be to bore through the rear of their cylinders and devise a new method of ignition and case extraction. Once Colt realized that the metallic cartridge was the wave of the future, they had to scramble to try to keep up with Smith & Wesson.

Smith & Wesson, however, had largely ignored the big-bore market until 1870 and had been concentrating on the .22 Short Rimfire Model 1. That left room for the competition.

Charles Brinckerhoff Richards (Dec. 23, 1835 – April 20, 1919) was an engineer who worked for Colt's Patent Fire Arms Co. After the

onset of the American Civil War, he returned to Colt in 1861, eventually becoming superintendent of engineering at the factory in Hartford, Connecticut. Richards' first major post-Civil War design was a metallic cartridge conversion known appropriately as the Richards Conversion.

The Richards Conversion was performed on the Colt 1860 Army revolver. The caliber was .44 Colt, and an ejector rod replaced the loading lever. This conversion added a breech plate with a firing pin and a rear sight mounted on the breech plate. Colt manufactured 9,000 of these revolvers between 1873 and 1878.

William Mason (Jan. 30, 1837 –

CONVERSION CARTRIDGES SIMPLIFIED

Contrary to popular belief, the .45 Colt was not the choice for converting your cap-and-ball Army, since it did not even exist until 1873. The original conversion cartridge for the Colt 1860 Army was the .44 Colt. It fired a 225-grain, .451-inch diameter bullet over 15 grains of Black powder. It actually survived to about 1940 in a smokeless powder version.

The Remington New Army of 1858 was originally factory-converted to fire the .46 Rimfire. It fired a .456-inch, 227-grain lead bullet over 15 or 20 grains of black powder.

The 1872 Open Top was factory chambered to fire the .44 Henry Rimfire, using a .446-inch diameter bullet weighing 200 grains, with 13 grains of black powder.

July 17, 1913) was a patternmaker, engineer and inventor who worked for Remington Arms, Colt's Patent Fire Arms Manufacturing Co. and Winchester Repeating Arms Co. in the 19th century. Mason left Remington Arms in 1866 to work for Colt as the superintendent of the armory.

Along with Richards, Mason patented designs to convert percussion revolvers into rear-loading metallic cartridge revolvers. Those converted revolvers are identified as the Richards-Mason Conversion. There were approximately 2,100 Richard-Mason M1860 Army Conversions made from 1877 to 1878.

THE COLT OPEN TOP

After Smith & Wesson's exclusive rights to the Rollin White patent expired in 1870, Mason began work on Colt's first metallic cartridge revolver in 1871: the Colt Model 1871-72 "Open Top" revolver.

This handgun was developed following two patents, the first one in 1871 and the second one in 1872. It is estimated that the production span lies primarily between Febru-

ary of 1872 and June of 1873.

It is sometimes named Colt Model 1871 or Colt Model 1872, but at this time the most common accepted name is the Colt Model 1871-72 Open Top. About 7,000 of them were produced during this time period. The Open Top was a completely new design, and the parts would not interchange with the older percussion pistols. Grip sizes were made in both Navy (short) and Army (long) versions.

Mason moved the rear sight to the rear of the barrel as opposed to the hammer or the breechblock of the earlier efforts. The caliber was .44 Henry and it was submitted to the U.S. Army for testing in 1872. The Army rejected the pistol and asked for a more powerful caliber and a stronger frame.

Mason redesigned the frame to incorporate a top strap, similar to the Remington revolvers and placed the rear sight in a notch on the rear of the frame, and the rest is history. The famous Colt Single Action Army Model of 1873 in .45 Colt was born.

THE REMINGTON 1858 NEW ARMY CONVERSION

In 1868, Remington began offering five-shot metallic cartridge conversions of its New Army revolver in .46 rimfire. Remington paid a royalty fee to Smith & Wesson, owners of the Rollin White patent (#12,648, April 3, 1855) on bored-through revolver cylinders for metallic cartridge use.

The Remington Army cartridge conversions were the first large-caliber cartridge revolvers available, beating even Smith & Wesson's .44 American to market by nearly two years.

Even though Remington had manufactured some 130,000 Model 1858 New Army style revolvers, only 4,575 were converted. These replaced the six-shot cap-and-ball cylinder with a five-shot .46-caliber cartridge version for \$3.36 apiece.

MODERN CONVERSIONS

"Modern" Factory-Ready Cap-and Ball conversions can be purchased from Uberti. As of this

writing, they make conversion models for the Army and Navy Colt, and the New Army Remington.

The 1851 Navy is made in .38 Special. The others can be had in .38 Special or .45 Colt except the Remington, which is made in .45 Colt only. I did not test any of the conversions by Uberti, but I did test their superb 1872 Open Top. None of these guns are really conversions, but shooter-ready cartridge guns built with modern materials.

MY OWN CONVERSIONS

Still and all, I wanted to try to actually convert a cap-and-ball revolver to fire modern metallic cartridges. I had on hand two Uberti Replicas: An 1860 Colt Army and an 1858 Remington New Army, both cap-and-ball revolvers.

I wanted to convert them to fire the .45 Colt cartridge. However, I did not want to get into any frame modifications, and so this pretty much elimi-



Cylinder has spacers just like originals to facilitate the shortened cartridge conversion cylinder.

nated the Colt from consideration. Because the cylinder cannot be removed from the Colt without first removing the barrel, the only way to have an effective conversion was to have an ejector rod and loading gate installed. Both operations require machining and or drilling and tapping to accomplish. This left the 1858 Remington for consideration.

KIRST TO THE RESCUE

Every cowboy fan has seen the Clint Eastwood movie "Pale Rider." Who can forget the gunfight finale when the Preacher walks down the street firing his 1858 Remington cartridge conversion and reloading it by rapidly changing the cylinders?

Well, good news. That very

same conversion is available to any proud owner of an Uberti 1858 Remington New Army cap-and-ball revolver through Kirst Konverter, LLC. They also offer conversions for all of the popular Colt replicas as well as the Ruger Old Army. Check your state laws

regarding these conversions.

Kirst offers several different kinds of conversions for the Remington New Army from drop-in to full blown custom. I wanted the drop-in job so that I did not have to cut up my 1858 (especially since I didn't own it; it was a loan from

CHRONOGRAPH DATA

GUN	LOAD	MUZZLE VELOCITY
1858 KIRST CONVERSION	HORNADY 255 GR. COWBOY	707 FPS
1858 KIRST CONVERSION	WINCHESTER 250 GR. COWBOY	689 FPS
UBERTI 1872 OPEN-TOP	HORNADY 255 GR. COWBOY	732 FPS
UBERTI 1872 OPEN-TOP	WINCHESTER 250 GR. COWBOY	659 FPS

LEGEND: Muzzle velocities are the average of five shots recorded on an Oehler 35P Professional chronograph with the start screen set six feet from the muzzle. Elevation: 2,000'. Temp: 98 degrees F.



Close-up of the Uberti conversion's retrofitted loading gate. Note widened cutout to clear cartridge bases.



A bevy of cartridge conversions from Kirst.

Uberti). Thus I opted for the “Pale Rider” version, and I was not disappointed.

Along with the five-shot cartridge cylinder from Kirst, came a list for trouble shooting various problems that may occur when trying to fit the cylinder to the gun.

Happily, none were needed. The cartridge cylinder dropped right in and kind of aligned itself after a few dry-fires. The funny thing is, the Kirst cylinder takes a fraction of the time to get in the New Army as does the Uberti cap-and-ball cylinder.

One would think this is be-

cause of loose tolerances of the Kirst, but this was not the case. The cylinder locked up tightly with no lateral play, or any end-shake. Barrel/cylinder gap was a consistent .005 inch on all five chambers. It was just great, done right, period.

Interestingly, since all the cartridges load and eject at the same time, removing the cylinder and replacing it seems as fast as loading (and ejecting) a conventional single action revolver one at a time.

Shooting the conversion with cowboy loads alongside the superbly balanced 1872 Open Top was a pleasant experience. While

“Best of all, I can quickly and easily switch the Remington back to a cap-and-ball black powder gun on a moment’s notice.”

the Remington had shot to point-of-aim with 30 grains of Pyrodex and the Hornady 140-grain lead ball, it now shot about 6 inches high at 25 yards with the heavier cartridge loads.



The 1872 with the proper .45 Colt ammo.



The Remington cylinder is slightly longer than the Colt replacement.

The 1872 Open Top—with its 1860 Army pattern front sight—did so as well. However, windage was perfect so just a bit of Kentucky “elevation” is in order. The Old West adage: “Aim low; don’t shoot too fast” applies here.

Best of all, I can quickly

and easily switch the Remington back to a cap-and-ball black powder gun on a moment’s notice. I highly recommend the Uberti 1858 New Army combined with the Kirst “Pale Rider” Conversion. It’s the best of then and now.

GNSL

GUN SPECS

Name: UBERTI 1858 NEW ARMY REVOLVER (REMINGTON REPLICA-341000)

Type: Cap-And-Ball Revolver

Powder: Black powder or Pyrodex

Weight: 2.7 Pounds

OAL: 13.6 Inches

Barrel: 8 Inches, Octagonal, 7-Grooves, Lh Twist

Capacity: 6

Design: Forged Steel, Solid Frame

Caliber: .44 (Shoots .454 Lead Ball)

Grips: Two-Piece Walnut

MSRP: \$369.00

Name: UBERTI 1872 LATE MODEL OPEN TOP (341350) WITH LONG “ARMY” GRIP

Design: Forged Steel

Type: Cartridge

Caliber: .45 Colt “Cowboy”

Barrel: 7.5 Inches, Round

Capacity: 6

OAL: 13 Inches

MSRP: \$569.00

SOURCES

www.Uberti.com
www.Winchester.com
www.Hornady.com
www.kirstkonverter.com

LIVING Legend

**HENRY AND MARLIN LEVER ACTIONS
ARE GREAT PLATFORMS FOR KEEPING
THE .45-70 GOING STRONG**



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY ABE ELIAS

What if you could go shooting with a legend?

A legend that has been to war, killed every type of big game on the North American continent and killed the big six of Africa. Well, the .45-70 Government cartridge is that legend. Few rifle cartridges have had the long service record of the .45-70.

Although this cartridge is 142 years old, firearms companies continue to chamber rifles for it today. I selected the

Marlin 1895GBL and the Henry .45-70 lever action to put this grand old cartridge to the test.

It's interesting that the most popular firearms in .45-70 today are lever actions. The .45-70 became our military service in 1873, but the rifle that fired it was the Trap-Door Springfield. It wasn't until 1881 that Marlin chambered a lever action rifle for it and Winchester didn't come out with a .45-70 lever gun until it introduced the Model 1886.



We ran a number of rounds through both rifles. Both rifles took the higher pressures of the Garret custom cartridges with no issues.



The front sight on the Marlin is a caged front sight, which I prefer on a dangerous game rifle. A front cage helps you frame a close target quickly to get off a shot on target.

HENRY .45-70 LEVER ACTION (MODEL H010)

Henry Repeating Arms makes the Model H010 .45-70 lever action. First off, if you are wondering if the Henry action can withstand some of the

higher-pressure rounds, I tested the Garrett 540-grain round out of it, which produces pressures around 35,000 cup.

The Henry action withstood the pressures, and the operation of the firearm was

flawless. I did not experience a jam or failure to chamber during the entire test.

At 100 meters, I got good groupings of about 3 inches. I know others will report better groupings. Those shots were taken off hand and, frankly, I don't claim to be a sniper. Shouldering the firearm comes easy. I can put the rifle up and level behind the sights quickly.

Henry rifles load from the end of the magazine tube. There is no loading gate on the receiver. If you don't want to fiddle with the magazine tube or if you want the capability to top off the magazine in a tactical situation, this rifle is not for you. I don't foresee using this firearm in a combat situation, and if a bear can get at me after five rounds of 540-grain .45-70, he has earned his dinner.

My only concern with that would be when you had to



On the top is the Henry model H010 .45-70 lever action and below is the Marlin 1895 GBL guide gun.

SUPER-PENETRATING GARRETT CARTRIDGES

A number of manufacturers still load .45-70 ammo. One small specialty company that produces top .45-70 loads is Garrett Cartridge Company. The company was first opened by Randy Garrett, and is now owned and operated by Ashley Emerson out of Texas.

To help run the tests on the Marlin and Henry Rifles, I picked up 420-grain and 540-grain loads. Garrett uses a bullet they call a "SuperHardCast Hammerhead," specially designed for large or dangerous game.

Garrett hardcast bullets are designed for deep penetration. Their heavy, non-expanding flat-nose bullets feature a wide meplat (frontal surface) and travel at modest velocities.

The Garrett philosophy is that these extremely hard bullets will stay intact, create a large, deep wound cavities and are more likely to penetrate tough muscle and bone to the vitals of dangerous game animals. By contrast, lighter, faster bullets that are made to expand will penetrate less and are more likely to fragment on impact. Those higher velocities rounds will get you flatter trajectories, however.

Bullets with a large diameter meplat tend to be short and front heavy, which gives it good terminal stability. With rear heavy bullets, on impact the rear of the bullet will try to overtake the front, causing the bullet to tumble or yaw and limit penetration.

On Garrett cartridges, the 420-grain bullet has a meplat of .330 inches and on the 540-grain bullet it is .360 inches in diameter. Even though the hardcast bullets will distort a bit on impact, combining the right velocity with the shape of the bullet helps to maintain the bullet's ability to penetrate. Large meplats such as on the Garrett cartridges will affect the bullets path more so than even the bullet's diameter.

Garrett Cartridge has tested their bullets on bundles of wet paper. With their hardcast bullets, they have achieved more than 6 feet of penetration.

"...if a bear can get at me after five rounds of 540-grain .45-70, he has earned his dinner."

change from a hunting load to a protection load. Say you just took down an elk and you and your crew were going to field dress it. I would most likely hunt with the .420-grain or 300-grain bullet. Once the game was down, I would want a 540-grain round in the chamber in case any bears got curious.

With a tube-fed rifle, the process of chambering different weight rounds is more involved. It would probably be easier to pre-load the tube with backup defense rounds in mind. I did find the tube to be a bit sticky. I pulled it out and found some scratches on it, so I gave it a quick buff with some wet and dry sandpaper. Problem solved.



Here you can see a small gap between the stock and receiver. For myself it was no major issue. I know some people want it to be picture perfect when they get it. My only concern is the recoil possibly having any long term effects due to the size of the caliber.

A benefit of the tube is that to unload your firearm, you don't have to cycle the action, which I like. The sights are good on the Henry; I wouldn't feel I had to replace them with aftermarket. The rifle comes

with a recoil pad and, yes, you need it. Several shooters of various ages took turns with the .45-70 and after shooting the Garrett 540-grain loads, we all looked like pitchers warming up in the bull pen.



The Marlin's action operated smooth and easy. We had no issues with chambering or ejection the entire time.

MARLIN 1895 GBL

The Marlin I chose to test was the 1895 GBL, which is their guide rifle with big loop lever. Fit and finish on the rifle was excellent except for a finger nail's gap around the receiver and tang. Truthfully, it seems like no big deal and I wouldn't probably mention it if I wasn't reviewing a .45-70. The recoil on this particular cartridge has me wondering if that won't end up being a problem one day. At this point, it is more of a question than a critique.

Shouldering the firearm came easy, but I don't seem to get behind the sights as quickly as with the Henry. The Marlin's forearm stock is chunkier than on the Henry, so that would be a thing of



The comb on the Henry stock made it easier for me to get a quick cheek weld when shouldering the rifle.

**“...Garrett...
bullets...stay intact,
create a large, deep
wound cavities and...
penetrate tough
muscle and bone to
reach the vitals of
dangerous game
animals.”**

HISTORY

The .45-70 Government first saw action in 1873. After the Civil War, the U.S. government was sitting on a surplus of muzzleloaders. The government was looking for an economical way to convert these rifles to breech-loading firearms. Erskine Allin came up with a way to convert the rifles into breechloaders by using what became known as a trap door loading system.

After the conversion, the rifles entered legendary status as the 1873 Springfield rifle nicknamed the "Trap Doors." In 1892 the Calvary replaced the Springfield 1873 with the .30-40 Krag rifle. For sometime afterwards, the Trapdoor and the .45-70 still saw service with a number of other military units.

The .45-70 seems steeped in history seeing that it saw so much use in settling the West, even though its use in the military was just about 20 years. George Armstrong Custer, led his troops into the battle of Little Big Horn. His troops carried the Springfield rifles and Colt revolvers.

The .45-70 was in use in the Spanish-American War as well. Some of the troops at the battle of San Juan Hill were equipped with Springfield 1873 rifles.

After its military service ended, it found its place as a sporting cartridge, where it again added to its legendary status. It has taken every type of large game on the North American continent and has been on safari around the globe.

A number of companies still chamber firearms in .45-70, including a number of lever actions and some single shot reproductions.

preference for someone. I found the Henry's trimmer stock more comfortable to cradle.

I did like the sights on the Marlin. On a dangerous game rifle, I pre-

fer a caged front sight. If need be when under pressure, you can line the back sight up in the cage and, at close distances, that is enough to get one on target if you are pressed

to make a shot.

The rear sight blade is plain with no markings on it. I would want to change that. During testing, the firearm operated flawlessly,



All except for the loading gate the two receivers (Marlin on top and Henry below) look like carbon copies of each other.

GUN SPECS

Name: MARLIN 1895GBL

Caliber: .45-70

Capacity: 6

Action: Lever

Stock: American Pistol grip two-tone laminate

Barrel: 18 1/2 inches

Twist rate: 1 in 20 r/h

Sights: Adjustable open sights, folding rear, hooded front with brass bead on front post.

Overall Length: 37 inches

Weight: 7 pounds

MSRP: \$649.99

Name: HENRY .45-70 LEVER ACTION (MODEL H010)

Caliber: .45-70

Capacity: 4

Action: Lever

Stock: Pistol grip American Walnut with butt pad

Barrel: 18.43 inches

Twist rate: 1 in 20 r/h

Sights: Fully adjustable semi buckhorn rear Brass beaded front sight

Overall Length: 39 inches

Weight: 7.08 pounds

MSRP: \$850.00

with no jams or failures to feed.

Ejection was good and clean. Even though it had the large loop on it, it cycled well. I usually find the large loop takes a bit more effort to cycle the action because of the distance and the change of angle.

Loading the firearm was no problem; the loading gate wasn't overly stiff. With a loading gate you can do a tactical reload or if need be, top off with a different weight bullet. The recoil pad on the Marlin



Henry on the left and Marlin on the right. Here is a picture of the rear sights of both rifles. The Henry sight has a painted diamond to help draw your line of vision to the notch. On the Marlin, the notch on the semi buckhorn style is plain.

was appreciated. It was fit well and was a bit stiffer than the one on the Henry, but had no noticeable performance differences.

OVERALL IMPRESSIONS

Both rifles have their receivers drilled and tapped for the addition of a scope mount rail, or you could buy aftermarket peep sights that will screw into the rear screw holes. Overall, both firearms were fun to shoot, if that can be said about a .45-70. Performance was flawless and, from what I could see, the rumored concerns about recent Marlin quality were unfounded in the example I tested. With any luck, this season one of these will be putting some meat on the table. **GNSL**

SOURCES

Manufacturer: Henry Repeating Arms
Website: www.henryrifles.com

Manufacturer: Marlin Firearms
Website: www.marlinfirearms.com

Manufacturer: Garrett Cartridge Co.
Website: www.garrettcartridges.com



At this angle you can see the size of the Garrett cartridge meplat on both the 420 grain (left) and the 540 grain (right) bullets.



It took a bit but as you can see with the grouping in the bottom left we started pulling our groups a bit tighter at the 100 meter mark.

Hinged- Frame FIREPOWER

**QUICK-TO-RELOAD S&W
SCHOFIELD AND NEW MODEL 3
REVOLVERS OFFERED
ALTERNATIVES TO COLT'S SAA**



This is the Percival Leather
flap holster with an original
Smith & Wesson revolver.



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BOB CAMPBELL

Looking over horse operas and TV shows of the past century, you would be forgiven if you assume the Colt Single Action Army was the only handgun used in the Old West.

Smith & Wesson actually sold a number of handguns in the West and gave Colt competition. They did not win the “contest,” but they became prosperous from foreign contracts.



Note the rugged latch of the Smith & Wesson Schofield. (Smith & Wesson photo)

HINGED FRAME DESIGNS

Smith & Wesson sold some 300,000 of their first model .22 and .32 caliber revolvers. During the period when they had a monopoly on bored-through cylinders with the Rollin White contract, they did not produce a big bore handgun as the smaller handguns sold well for them.

The hideout and emergency gun market was huge, but Smith & Wesson needed to produce a service grade handgun. The design of the original hinged frame revolver, with the barrel hinged to move upward, required the cylinder to be removed for reloading. Smith &

Wesson maintained a hinged frame but reversed the design into a top break that simultaneously ejected the cartridges.

The Smith & Wesson American Model was introduced in 1870. The .44 Smith & Wesson American cartridge was basically a centerfire .44 Henry. It was then improved as the .44 Russian.

While Smith & Wesson also enjoyed great success in foreign sales to Russia and Japan, they found that the Russian Model's frame hump and other features were unpopular with American shooters. Despite the advantage of simultaneous cartridge ejection

and rapid reloading, the Smith & Wesson was regarded as ungainly and underpowered compared to the Colt Single Action Army.

Against the Open Top revolver and earlier cap-and-ball revolvers, the Smith & Wesson had advantages but, against the SAA, the Smith & Wesson American was in second place.

SCHOFIELD IMPROVEMENTS

Smith & Wesson designed a new revolver to capitalize upon the good points of the Smith & Wesson American—fast reloading and excellent accuracy—and address the weakness of the barrel latch



**“The original...was not strictly...
a ‘cowboy gun.’ It was an adventurer’s
gun, a soldier’s gun and even a
Japanese naval officer’s gun.”**

This is a revolver that ensured Smith & Wesson’s success, the No 2 .32 Rimfire.

and the poor power of the cartridge. The Smith & Wesson Schofield was the result.

Due to the lessened leverage of the tilt barrel design, the Smith & Wesson Schofield could not use longer cartridges such as the .45 Colt. Smith & Wesson developed its own, shorter .45 S&W cartridge that was less powerful, but it was deemed adequate by the Army.

The Smith & Wesson Schofield was designed partly by Major George W. Schofield. Schofield’s work improvements included the redesign of the latch so that it mounted on the frame rather than the barrel, giving

greater durability. The patented locking system designed by Schofield earned him a royalty on each gun sold.

Major Schofield was certain the Smith & Wesson revolver with its simultaneous ejection of spent cartridges and ease of reloading was superior to the Colt, but military minds move slowly, and the Schofield was not a huge success.

It is interesting that the standard barrel length was 7 inches, but surplus sales were often made of Schofields with barrels cut to 5 inches. Smith & Wesson eventually offered the revolver with a shorter barrel. The balance was excellent

HOLSTERING THE NO. 3

When carrying the Taylor’s & Company handgun, I used a first class cowboy holster of the Slim Jim type from Rocking K Saddlery. The revolver rides low in the holster, affording good retention. Yet, when you are ready, a tug and the revolver is in the hand.

The holster features border tooling and first class stitching, fit and finish. I have used several holsters from this maker, always with complete satisfaction.

with the shorter barrel. The shorter guns were popular with Wells Fargo agents.

NEW MODEL 3

The New Model 3 was introduced in 1878. The new grip design was more rounded and the re-



Rocking K Saddlery offers first class leather and Uberti offers a modern clone of the Schofield.

This Taylor's & Company revolver wears special white grips.

OLD WEST S&W'S BY THE NUMBERS

- 300,000** – The number of S&W First Model revolvers sold
- 3,000** – The number of S&W Schofields sold to the U.S. Army
- 35,000** – The number of S&W New Model No. 3 revolvers sold
- 2072** – The number of S&W No. 3 Frontier models made
- 786** – The number of S&W No. 3 Frontier models sold to the Japanese

volver maintained legendary Smith & Wesson reliability. The No. 3 Frontier featured another grip redesign to rival the comfort of the plow handled Colt. A replica of that gun is now offered by Uberti.

Though 35,000 of the New Model 3 revolvers were sold, only a few thousand of the No. 3 Frontier variation were sold. A great advantage over previous revolvers was a long cylinder that could be cham-

bered for the popular .44-40 WCF cartridge. Modern replicas are offered primarily in .45 Colt.

Those that have handled the Frontier Model and its replicas find this revolver the best handling Smith & Wesson of the era. The improved Schofield lock also makes for a hardier revolver.

But the Smith & Wesson No. 3 Frontier Model was not a commercial success. Some 2,072 were

manufactured before production was stopped due to a lack of demand. The company sold 786 to the Japanese after conversion to the .44 Russian cartridge. (Russian and Japanese Smith & Wesson revolvers faced each other during the Russo-Japanese War, but that is a story for another time.)

Smith & Wesson offered a double-action Frontier Model in .44-40 that outpaced the single



All cartridges did not always eject—be certain to work latch vigorously.



The operating mechanism of the Smith & Wesson No. 2 was advanced but soon gave way to a better system.

“Loading time is much faster than with the Single Action Army.”

action revolver by leagues—about 13 to 1 in sales. Recently I have been able to obtain and fire a modern reproduction of the Smith & Wesson No. 3 Frontier.

NO. 3 FRONTIER REPLICA

Taylor’s & Company offers this revolver, which is manufactured in Italy by Uberti. My version features a 5-inch barrel and deep blue finish. The new No. 3 Frontier is of-

fered in .45 Colt. This makes a lot of sense for practical use, economy and hand loading.

With standard or “cowboy” loads, the .45 Colt offers low recoil and decent accuracy. I like the balance of the 5-inch barrel. The No. 3 Frontier is among the best fitted and finished Uberti revolvers. The blue finish is deep, rich and attractive.

The barrel latch, trigger guard

STOUDENMIRE CARRIED A S&W

Smith & Wesson revolvers were also used by notable outlaws and lawmen alike in the West. You must remember, however, that many lawmen and outlaws also owned many guns. Famed Texas Lawman Dallas Stoudenmire carried Smith & Wesson .44s and the U.S. Army used 3,000 Schofield revolvers.

and hammer are case hardened. The ejector spring actuator, which rides in front of the trigger guard, is also case hardened.



The Schofield was a joy to fire and use.

A GOOD SHOOTER

To load the revolver, place the hammer in the safety notch. The cylinder will then free wheel. You may then lift the barrel latch. The barrel is moved downwards for loading. You will load one cartridge at a time into the six chambers of the cylinder. Close the latch and the revolver is ready to fire.

After firing, open the barrel. As the barrel is moved downward, the spring-loaded ejector star ejects all the cartridges simultaneously. If you are firing leisurely, you may ease the barrel and cylinder assembly open and reload a round or two if you wish.

The trigger is smooth and

breaks at a crisp 4 pounds. Among the best things about this revolver are the sights. The rear sight is a protected V type. This sight coupled with the sharp front post allows a great sight picture.

I fired the Winchester 250-grain Cowboy load during the evaluation. This averaged about 750 fps from the No. 3's 5-inch barrel. Firing off hand at targets at various ranges, the No. 3 Frontier proved accurate. I could not resist firing a few rounds as quickly as possible, then ejecting the cartridge cases and reloading.

This is a tactical single-action revolver. Loading time is much faster than with the Single Action

Army. As for absolute accuracy, firing off the bench at 15 yards gave a credible 1½-inch group.

Winchester ammunition was reliable and clean burning. Winchester is a great resource for those that do not hand load. 250-grain loads fired about 2 inches high at 15 yards; 225-grain cast bullet hand loads were dead on target. The well-defined sights are a great help in marksmanship.

A PART OF HISTORY

The handgun is an important and necessary tool today, and it was perhaps more important in the Old West. I suspect the pick and plow, spike driving wedge, the field



This isn't a clone but a reintroduction by Smith & Wesson. This is the personal revolver of Jeff Quinn, noted writer and firearms expert. (Jeff Quinn photo)

axe and branding iron were also important. Just the same, the handgun arrests our interest.

The Smith & Wesson No. 3 Frontier is an important piece of history. If I could afford an original, I probably would not fire it. The original handgun was not strictly what I'd call a "cowboy gun." It was an adventurer's gun, a soldier's gun and even a Japanese naval officer's gun.

The Taylor's & Company No. 3 Frontier replica is a link to the Old West and is at least as well made as the original and probably stronger. It's a great all-around handgun with much to recommend. **GNSL**

SOURCES

Taylor's & Company:
www.taylorsfirearms.com
 Rockingsaddlery:
www.rockingsaddlery.com
 Uberti: www.uberti.com



The Uberti revolver was pretty smoked up after 70 rounds of .45 Colt, common with this cartridge. It functioned well.



An original box of .32 Rimfire—too valuable to fire.



Crazy Kurt from New Mexico,
10th overall Wild Bunch

GUINS Blazing

THE SINGLE ACTION SHOOTING SOCIETY GIVES MODERN-DAY, WOULD-BE COWBOYS A CHANCE TO RELIVE THE OLD WEST

BY KATIE FERRARO-CREIGH AKA, JUSTICE LILY KATE, SASS # 1000
PHOTOS BY GREG NEVITT

Where else can you dress up and play cowboy on the weekends while firing your favorite old shootin' irons? The Single Action Shooting Society (SASS).

The SASS offers several types of competitions. There's Cowboy Action Shooting, where shooters are competing with single-action revolvers, lever-action rifles and double-barrel shotguns. Then there are the Wild Bunch competitions, styled after the movie of the same name, where shooters compete with weapons used after the turn of the century: lever-action rifles, 1911 pistols and external hammer pump action shotguns.

In SASS Mounted Shooting events, competitors navigate an obstacle course on horseback—similar to barrel racing—while shooting blank cartridges through their single action revolvers at balloons.

There are categories in all three disciplines to accommodate all ages, sizes, talents, experience and calibers.



Idaho Six Gun Sam, top overall Lady Wild Bunch shooter, in the Wild Bunch Finals Shoot off.

Texas Tiger making those targets "quiver" as usual.

WIDESPREAD EVENTS

The Single Action Shooting Society is an international organization created in the early 1980s to preserve and promote the sport of Cowboy Action Shooting. More than 100,000 shooters worldwide have competed in these events. There are 550 clubs nationwide, with every state represented, and 17 member clubs in foreign countries.

SASS endorses regional matches conducted by these affiliated clubs, all leading up to End of Trail, the world championship of Cowboy Action Shooting. That

“Where else but with SASS can you dress up and play cowboy on the weekends while firing your favorite old shootin’ irons?”

competition is held each year at the SASS complex in New Mexico. This year marked the 34th year of the event.

THE MAIN EVENT

In Cowboy Action Shooting, contestants compete with firearms

typical of those used in the taming of the Old West: single action revolvers, pistol caliber lever action rifles and old time shotguns. Each competition consists of several timed shooting stages and each stage features an Old West theme or scenario. The targets are steel.

COWBOY MOUNTED SHOOTING

What is SASS Mounted Shooting? Think of a cowboy or cowgirl atop a 1,200-pound horse, six guns blazing while galloping through a patterned course of fire. SASS mounted shooting is one of the nation's fastest growing equestrian



Shamrock Sadie:
Wild Bunch Finals
Shoot off

Shamrock Sadie (right) and SASS Kicker
congratulate each other on a good showing
during the Cowboy Top Gun Finals.

sports and is a direct spin-off of Cowboy Action Shooting.

Mounted shooting is a sport that combines elements of old-time Wild West Show exhibition, along with the elements of barrel racing, pole bending, reining and many other equestrian skills.

While riding through these stages, shooters use two .45-caliber single action revolvers, loaded with five rounds each of black powder blanks, to shoot 10 balloon targets set in a special pattern to depict an Old West-type scenario.

Typically, a competitor crosses the timing beam at a full gallop

and engages the first pattern of five targets. After a shooter fires the fifth shot, he or she returns the empty revolver to a holster and proceeds to the next set of five targets.

Mounted shooters are timed through the stage determining raw time plus any penalties incurred. For instance, five seconds are added to a shooter's raw time for each knocked-over barrel, dropped gun or missed target. The contestant with the fastest accumulated time wins.

There are Divisions 1 through 5, Ladies 1 through 5, Junior, Senior

2015 END OF TRAIL RESULTS

MEN'S CAS TOP 3

1. Matt Black, Junior Boy
2. Deuce Stevens, Cowboy
3. Slick McClade, BW

MEN'S WILD BUNCH TOP 2

1. Last Chance Morales, Oregon
2. Boggus Deal, New Mexico
3. Captain Sam Evans, Texas

LADY'S TOP 3

1. SASS Kicker, Cowgirl
2. Shamrock Sadie, Lady 49'er
3. Holy Terror, Cowgirl

LADY'S WILD BUNCH TOP 3

1. Idaho Six Gun Sam, Oregon
2. Shamrock Sadie, Illinois
3. Half-A-Hand Henry, New Mexico

Wild Bunch Match:
Timer and Shooter



SHOOTING CATEGORIES

SASS recognizes shooting categories based upon age, gender, costuming, equipment, shooting style and/or propellant. The age for a competitor is determined by their age on the first day the match starts. All SASS categories may be subdivided by gender. Competitors may compete within any category for which they qualify.

AGE BASED

- Juniors are persons aged 16 and under. The category may be subdivided by age and gender. Suggested divisions are "Young Guns" aged 14 through 16, and "Buckaroos" 13 and under.
- Cowboy Category shooters are competitors of any age range.
- Wrangler Category shooters are competitors 36 years of age or older.
- Forty-Niners are competitors 49 years of age or older.
- Seniors are competitors 60 years of age or older.
- Silver Seniors are competitors 65 years of age or older.
- Elder Statesmen/Grand Dames are competitors 70 years of age or older.

DUELIST

- "Duelist Style" is defined as shooting a revolver cocked and fired one handed, unsupported.
- "Double Duelist Style" is defined as shooting a revolver cocked and fired one handed and unsupported with each hand—that is, left gun with the left hand and right gun with the right.

GUNFIGHTER

- "Gunfighter Style" is defined as shooting with a revolver in each hand. Revolvers must be cocked and fired one handed, unsupported, one right-handed and the other left-handed.

Other categories include: Frontier Cartridge Gunfighter, Blackpowder, Frontiersman, Classic Cowboy/Cowgirl and "B" Western.

"Each competition consists of several timed shooting stages and each stage features an Old West theme or scenario."

Limited, Senior Open, Junior and Cart Divisions in SASS Mounted Shooting. Each competitor enters the sport at the Division 1 level and moves on up through the levels as experience, competence and skill are achieved.



Blackpowder is popular with all ages but it's hard to clean.

SASS'S WILD BUNCH SHOOTING

The Wild Bunch Action Shooting shares similarities to SASS Cowboy Action Shooting with some notable differences. The sport uses 1911 pistols in .45 ACP, lever action rifles chambered for pistol calibers of .40 and above, and model 1897 12gauge pump shotguns.

Sanctioned matches are designed specifically to provide stage scenarios. They incorporate down range and lateral movement, more pistol and shotgun



Little Fast Hammer, 8 years old, takes careful aim. He's NOT the youngest shooter to compete.



Blackpowder times Stoney Creek Drifter on a stage. Notice the wind wasn't blowing, which made it difficult to see the targets. That's one of the drawbacks to shooting black powder.



Lady Wild Bunch shooter Scirocco Roma from California.

rounds fired per stage, and a variety of reactive targets such as plate racks, dueling trees, moving targets and rifle/pistol knockdown targets.

SASS FACILITIES

Founders Ranch is the organization's shooting sports complex in Edgewood, New Mexico.

The ranch is a 480-acre, 1-by-

¾-mile rectangle surrounded by a 7-foot game fence. It is also home to a herd of Longhorn cattle, 17 shooting bays, an arena, an Old West town and chapel, and a



Shooter is dressed to the nines and taking careful aim.

sporting clays course.

The ranch provides a safe, supervised venue for recreational shooting, sporting and outdoor events, as well as facility rentals to the local, national and international community.

Other facilities include Founders Ranch Shotgun Sports Club, Founders Ranch Shooting Range and Founders Ranch Facility Rentals.

A REAL SHOOTING GALLERY

In addition, Founders Ranch is home of one of the few surviving H. W. Terping 1950s vintage .22 shooting galleries. The SASS Western Heritage Museum and

Cowboy Action Shooting Hall of Fame acquired this piece almost six years ago.

The shooting gallery harkens back to the day when shooting galleries were part of carnivals and fairs across the country. SASS has painstakingly replaced the almost priceless original targets with faithful and precise reproductions—ducks, rabbits, squirrels, pipes, eagles and more.

A recent partnership with Henry Repeating Arms Co. has equipped the gallery with .22 rifles. It is one of only a handful of original shooting galleries that can still be shot. **GNSL**

COSTUMING

One of the unique aspects of SASS approved Cowboy Action Shooting is the requirement placed on costuming. Each participant is required to adopt a shooting alias appropriate to a character or profession of the late 19th century, a Hollywood Western star, or an appropriate character from fiction. The member's costume is then developed accordingly.

Members can also choose from historical family names or experiences. Some monikers are personal and poignant to shooters, especially if that alias brings warm and fuzzy memories.

For many participants, donning the Western hats, gun belts and boots and getting into character are as much of an attraction as the actual shooting competitions.

CONTACT

For more information, check out the SASS website at <http://www.sassnet.com>



Double Defense

**THE AMERICAN DERRINGER .45 COLT/.410, A
VERSION OF THE OLD WEST'S MAIN POCKET
PISTOL, OFFERS TWO BARRELS OF PROTECTION**

The American Derringer .45 Colt/.410 comes in a velvet-lined case befitting a gun of its quality.

ORP. WACO, TX .45 COLT/.410 X 2.5

.45 COLT or
2½ INCH .410

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JIM DICKSON

This small, flat pistol was equally at home up a sleeve, in an ankle holster, in any pocket available, in a hat, and any place you can imagine and a few you can't.

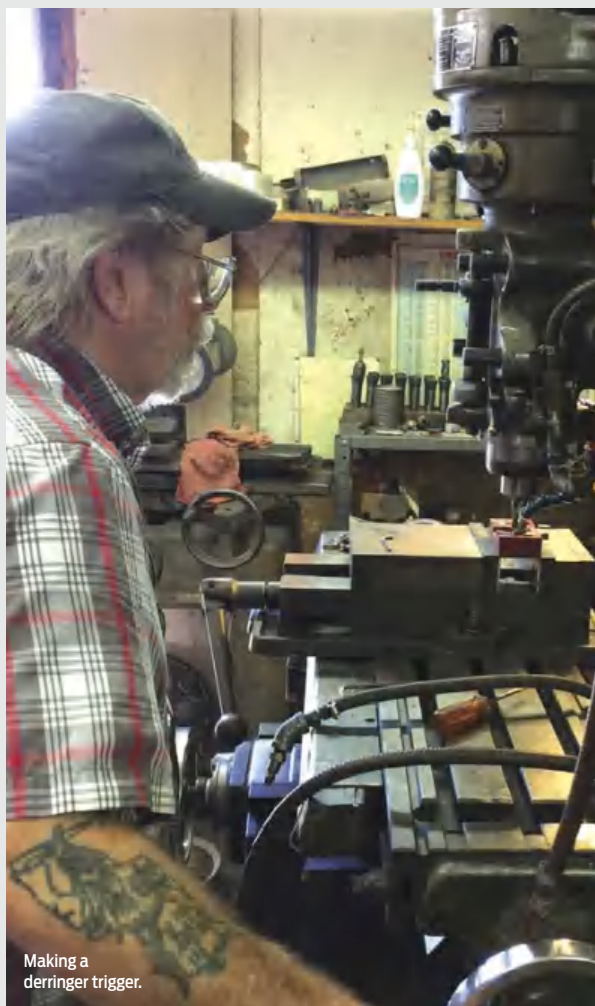
It was the Remington .41 rimfire double derringer, and it was the predominant pocket pistol of Old West fame.

Today, the American Derringer Company in Waco, Texas, is making the ultimate version of the old favorite. Among the many calibers offered, they have a stainless steel double derringer in .45 Colt/.410 shotgun (2½-inch shells).

This one offers real slap-down, man-stopping authority. It only takes one .45 Colt per customer, and the .410 shotgun shell capability makes it a potent snake gun. Having used it to kill rattlesnakes, I can tell you it works.



Surface grinding double derringer barrels.



Making a derringer trigger.

IMPROVED DESIGN

The American Derringer has a significant mechanical improvement over the original Remingtons, namely a hammer block safety. It prevents the gun from firing if there's an inadvertent blow to the hammer that might occur if the gun was dropped.

The safety is automatically disengaged when the gun is cocked. That's my kind of safety—one that's there when needed yet automatically comes off when you start to fire.

It is important to always use this safety, especially when loading. The firing pin on all double derringers protrudes when the hammer is down, and if you swing the loaded

OLD WEST PROTECTION

In the Old West, the big advantages of the Remington double derringer were its two-shot capacity and its flat contours that made it ride flat and unnoticed wherever it was secreted.

It wasn't just the bad guys who liked it. The average citizen who packed a pistol "just in case" often wanted the easiest gun available to hide and carry.

Women carried them their hand muffs and their purses, while men kept coming up with innovative hiding places to carry it. It was the 19th century's answer to thieves and muggers.

The .41 rimfire was not a very powerful cartridge. Shoot it into a tree and you can see the base of the bullet looking back at you. Shoot a man and it usually won't exit. Still, a gunshot wound in the Old West was often fatal as doctors were not too good at saving patients with gunshot wounds back then. On the plus side, no one ever complained of the recoil of the .41 rimfire.

The original double derringer was the classic "belly gun" of its day, as it could be carried in the any pocket and was intended to be used at such close range that you would literally stick it towards the opponents belly and give him both barrels.

No one ever said these derringers were intended for any sort of long range shooting. They were always intended for point blank use.

barrels shut against a protruding firing pin, the gun can fire.

This has never seemed to be a problem in the over 100 years the various double derringers have been made, but it is simply because their users were aware of the situation.

This gun has another modern innovation: stainless steel construction. This is very important in a carry gun as sweat rusts guns quickly and sooner or later many people can't wipe a gun down on time. Stainless steel is not rust



DERRINGER OR DERINGER?

Henry Deringer was a gun-maker who produced the Philadelphia Deringer, a single-shot, muzzleloading pocket pistol in the mid-19th century.

Small pistols became so popular that soon small pocket pistols became known by the generic term "derringer," derived from a common misspelling of the original designer's name. The term "derringer" continued to be used with the introduction of modern metallic cartridge firearms and continues to be used to this day.

LEFT

Rough polishing the .45 Colt/.410 double derringer.



American Derringer makes some models that are quite ornate. (American Derringer photo)

proof, but it does give you more time in a pinch without the gun rusting.

SHOOTING IMPRESSIONS

I have fired this gun extensively and it is very pleasant to shoot. I take a firm grip on the gun

so I can get the second shot off quickly. The American Derringer .45/.410 has larger, more rounded grips than the relatively flat grips of the original Remington and that gives a better hold for more control.

For defensive work, I prefer the

tried and true .45 Colt cartridge, reserving the .410 for snakes. The .45 Colt has a reputation as a fight stopper that has proven itself capable over and over again, especially in larger revolvers such as the Colt SAA and New Service.

The quality of this American Derringer gun is first rate. In this day of mass production, it is nice to find that you can still get an entirely hand-made gun without going to a Best Quality gunmaker



SPECIFICATIONS

Manufacturer: American Derringer

Model: Model 1 Double derringer

Website: www.amderringer.com

Caliber: .45 Colt / .410 shotgun (2 1/2 -inch shells)

Material: 17-4 stainless steel

Weight: 15 ounces

Barrel: 3 inches

Overall length: 4.82 inches

Height: 3.35 inches

Width across frame: .9 inch

Width Across grips: 1.2 inches

Grips: Rosewood

MSRP: \$719

In these days of liability concerns, it's no surprise that the instructions for the safety are printed right on the side of the gun. (American Derringer photo)



Swing the barrel release lever down so that the barrels can be pivoted up for loading.

in the British Isles and paying a five- or six-figure price.

This is an original American small business as there are only two people there: Elizabeth Saunders and John Price. They are both fanatical about quality and always emphasize quality over quantity.

These guns bear no resemblance to the cheap imported .22 and .38 special double derringers of the 1950s and 1960s. The American Derringer is a first rate example of the best of American gun-making skill.

When you want the most power in the smallest package for close range defense, this is the gun for you. It will stop a mugger or carjacker in his tracks, and it

can be concealed and carried easier than most anything approaching its power.

That's not to say that you can't make a smaller, lighter .45. But if you do, recoil is going to rear its ugly head, and you will be in for some real problems in a package that small.

Though I am not aware of any recoil from this derringer in .45 Colt, there may be some who can feel it. For those folks, there are always the cowboy action loads that launch the .45 Colt at the lower velocity of 700 fps.

This is in the neighborhood of the old .450 Adams and .455 Webley in velocity and they were the proven man-stopper cartridges of the 19th century British

There's Hollywood, and There's Reality

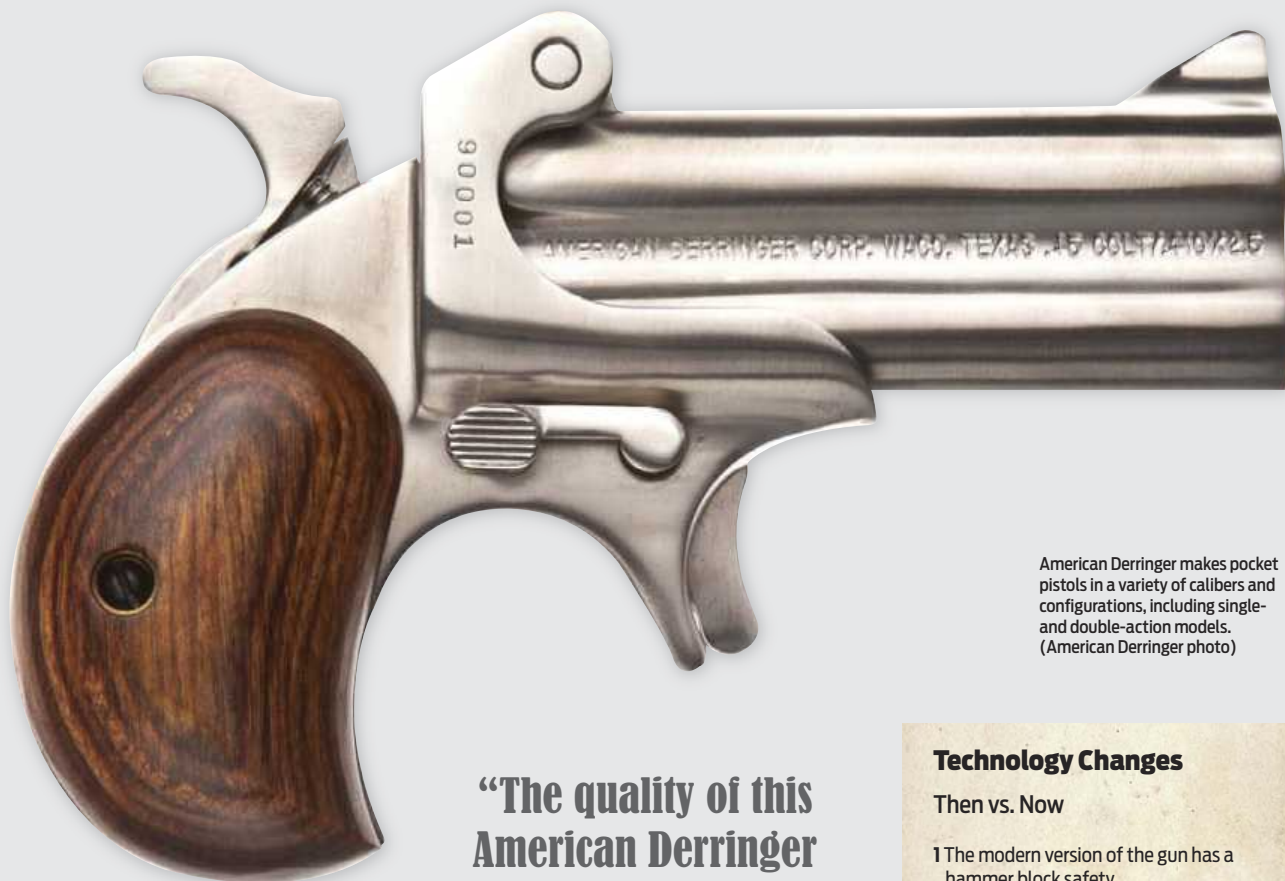
In the Old West, this gun was concealed in many ways, but it's quite clear there's a difference between Hollywood and reality.

Many of the Old West's shootings were as far from the Hollywood "High Noon" showdown as possible. Catching a man unawares and shooting him with a pistol under the table was so common that it gave rise to the term "underhanded."

Empire. In short, you still have plenty of power for defense against humans.

WHY NOT A DERRINGER?

The derringer has always been a special purpose hide-out and point blank defense pistol and as such it excels. I consider this American Derringer one the best of them all. **GNSL**



American Derringer makes pocket pistols in a variety of calibers and configurations, including single- and double-action models. (American Derringer photo)

“The quality of this American Derringer gun is first rate.”

Technology Changes

Then vs. Now

- 1 The modern version of the gun has a hammer block safety.
- 2 The current version is made from stainless steel.

SINGLE Solution

**ACCURATE, FAST-HANDLING .50-70
SHARPS CAVALRY CARBINES
WERE POPULAR WITH SETTLERS,
LAWMEN AND THE U.S. ARMY**

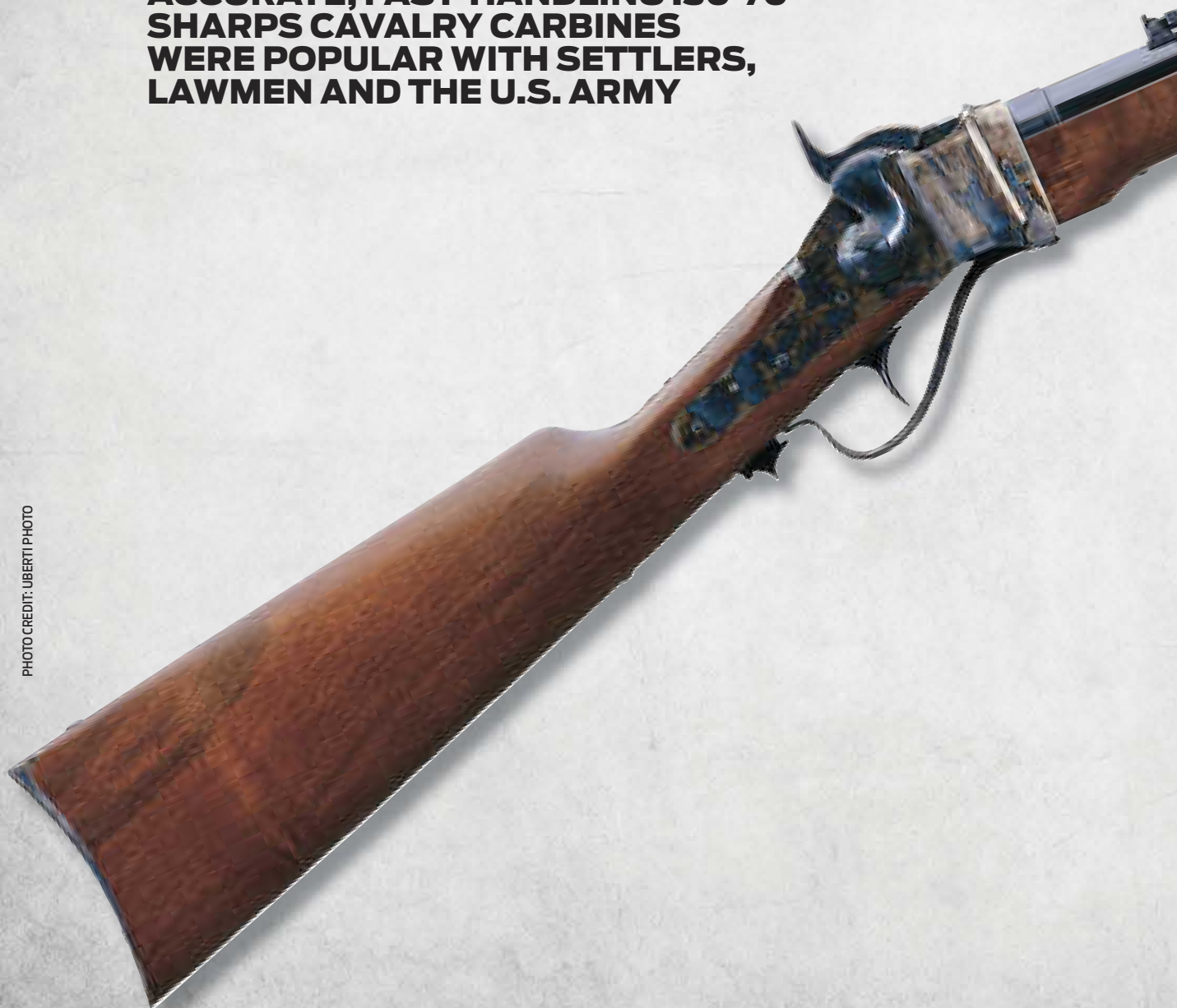


PHOTO CREDIT: UBERTI PHOTO

SHOT



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY JIM DICKSON

We think of the Colt revolver and the Winchester 73 when we think of Old West gunfights, but an accurate, fast-handling single-shot rifle was often the weapon of choice. One of the most prominent of these was the Sharps .50-70 cavalry carbine.

In 1875, Texas Ranger Captain Leander McNelly outfitted his Texas Ranger's Special Force with .50-70 Sharps carbines when he was given the job of clearing the bandits out of the Nueces Strip, the land between the Nueces River and the Rio Grande.

Sol Lichtenstein, the merchant selling the guns, tried to get him to buy the more expensive Winchester 73 repeating rifle, arguing that if a ranger missed with the Sharps he might not have time to reload.

McNelly retorted that, "I don't want men who miss," and bought the Sharps. The bandits were eliminated despite many of them having repeating rifles.

"Wild Bill" Hickok was a buffalo hunter who went on to become a lawman. He used to go down the center of the street carrying his Sharps rifle so that he could better see anyone ready to pop out around a corner and ambush him. Hickok was buried with his beloved Sharps rifle.

Buffalo Bill also used his .50-70 M1866 trapdoor Springfield when he went to successfully arrest an outlaw. He had other options but this was the gun he wanted.



“...the .50-70 Sharps was one of the first cartridge guns used by the Texas Rangers.”

The Sharps Cavalry Carbine was such a handy rifle that it didn't seem to bother its owners that it held just one shot. (Rock Island Auction photo)

CONVERTED FROM THE M1859

The Sharps .50-70 cavalry carbines were converted from Sharps M1859 paper cartridge breechloaders by Springfield Armory.

The North had bought more than 90,000 of these rifles during the Civil War, and it had also been copied by the Confederates in Richmond, Virginia.

Springfield Armory was also busy converting M1863 muzzle-loaders into .50-70 trapdoor Springfield rifles, but there would be no .50-70 trapdoor carbines made. The first trapdoor cavalry carbine was the Springfield M1873 .45-70. Until then, the cavalry made do with a mix of Spencer repeaters and Sharps .50-70 carbines.

They are on ordnance lists as Sharps carbines, caliber .50 “altered/improved.” There was no official designation or model number for them. Only those converted at Springfield Arsenal have a M1870 designation and few if any of those survive today.

Many of the conversions found their way into the civilian market and the .50-70 Sharps was one of the first cartridge guns used by the Texas Rangers. Both the guns and the ammunition remained readily available throughout the taming of the West. Sears Roebuck Co. was still selling them at the turn of the century.

GOOD ACCURACY

In a good rifle using ammunition sized to fit that particular gun's

SIMPLE MECHANISM

The simplicity of the Sharps, with its simple falling block action and familiar back action lock, looked a lot less complicated to most folks than the high tech Spencer, Henry and Winchester rifles with their strange and mysterious repeating rifle mechanisms.

Most folks considered that there was less to go wrong, and it would be easier to fix the Sharps if something did go wrong than the repeating rifle with its more complicated mechanism. That was a big factor for people heading where gunsmiths were few and might not be familiar with the latest guns.

rifling, the .50-70 is capable of minute of angle groups. Factory ammo in a gun off the rack usually gave 2 to 3 minutes of angle groups due to the varying bore sizes encountered. Because this is still better than most men can shoot with iron sights, the Sharps carbine has accuracy to spare.

The .50-70 has what is called



a “rainbow trajectory” by today’s standards, but it was considered flat shooting compared to the muzzleloaders that preceded it.

Back then, estimating the range and knowing where your gun shot at different ranges was all part of shooting. That skill has been largely lost, since the smokeless powder revolution in ammunition gave us such flat trajectories that very little correction is needed by the old standards.

The buffalo hunters were renowned for their long range shots, and Indians soon learned not to mess with them. They also became very attached to their rifles.

HANDLING QUALITIES

One factor favoring the Sharps .50-70 cavalry carbine was its extreme liveliness in the hands. It handles like a fine shotgun, yet is very steady to hold on target. When you throw it up fast, the sights seem to automatically align on the target and snap shooting is easy with this gun.

Being able to hit fast and accurately with the first shot with one of these big, heavy bullets



Right side view of the Sharps “Old Reliable.” The simple action was rarely out of order and easily fixed by frontier gunsmiths who were often baffled by the complicated new fangled repeating rifles when they first came out.



The Sharps lever has a safety latch to keep it from accidentally being snagged open in the brush.

meant a lot in a gunfight, and Sharps shooters had confidence that they could.

A common saying of single shot riflemen of the day was, "I've got a pistol if they are close, but with my rifle they aren't getting close." The plains Indians could testify to that as the buffalo hunters proved adept at shooting them off their horses before they could get close enough to do any damage.

A lot of men looked to the fast firepower of the Spencer, Henry and Winchester repeaters, but the single shot riflemen were quick to point out that they could fire 10 aimed shots per minute

with their single shots and more than 20 rapid firing. The new repeaters could not get off more than 10 aimed shots per minute, so where's the big advantage, they asked.

The fast-handling qualities and ease of hitting with the Sharps carbine made it one of the favorite rifles of the day for hunting and fighting. You could always depend on the big 450-grain .50-70 bullet moving at 1,250 fps to stop anything with one shot. It offered power without excessive recoil as well for the carbine weighs enough that it is not a kicker. That means no flinching.

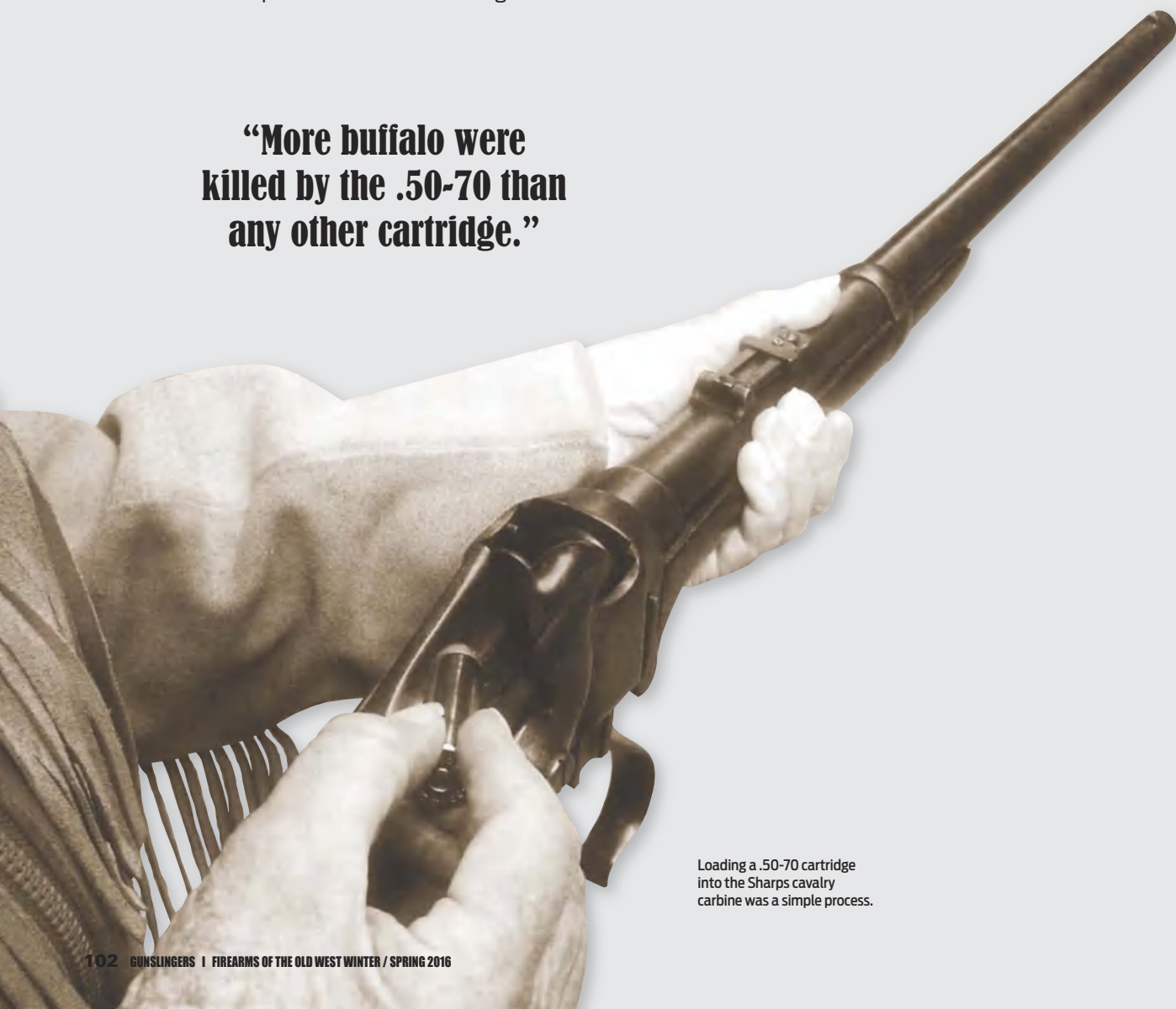
SHARPS FOR BUFFALO

Though the repeating rifle gets the most attention, many a Winchester 73 owner had the more powerful Sharps as well. If you were hunting buffalo, all you had to do was tell the commander of the Army post in the area, and he would often give you a case or two of free .50-70 ammo to shoot buffalo. Destroying the buffalo herds to subjugate the Indians was Army policy.

A .50-70 will shoot all the way through a buffalo from almost any angle. The buffalo hunters all agreed that the .50-70 hit harder than the .45-70 and preferred it for buffalo. More buffalo were killed by the .50-70 than any other cartridge.

The method of killing buffalo used by Buffalo Bill was to shoot from horseback. Buffalo Bill used a full length M1866 trapdoor Springfield .50-70 rifle that he named Lucretia Borgia on most of his buffalo. A lot of men preferred the cavalry carbine length .50-70 Sharps for this horseback shooting.

**"More buffalo were
killed by the .50-70 than
any other cartridge."**



Loading a .50-70 cartridge into the Sharps cavalry carbine was a simple process.

UNHERALDED HERO

You rarely saw the .50-70 Sharps cavalry carbine in the movies, so the gun is not widely recognized for the important role it played in the taming of the West. It was one of the main cavalry arms for a short, but critical, period when the Indians were being introduced to the effectiveness of the rapid fire cartridge gun.

It served with the Texas Rangers of the 1870s. It figured far more prominently in the destruction of the buffalo herds than it has been credited. It was the weapon of choice in many gun-fights of the day. It was a first class hunting weapon then and now. It was the rifle of many of those pioneers heading West. That's quite a legacy and worthy of respect.

GNSL



A look down the wide, .50-caliber bore of the Sharps.

THE ECONOMICAL CHOICE

The low price of the surplus Sharps .50-70 carbines was a big advantage for the man going west. Ammo was readily available and sometimes free. It was always relatively cheap. The Winchester 73 was not cheap and neither was the Winchester M1876. If you bought one of the new powerful M1876 Winchesters in .45-75 or .50-95, you also faced exorbitant ammo costs. This made the surplus Sharps the rifle of choice for many a westward bound pioneer family.



The Sharps Cavalry Carbine actions were modified to accept metallic cartridges from earlier paper cartridge models. (Rock Island Auction photo)



The Unknown FIREARMS COMPANY

**THE REVOLVERS OF MERWIN HULBERT
WERE SOME OF THE MOST INNOVATIVE
GUNS OF THE OLD WEST**



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY MIKE SEARSON

When we think of famous revolvers of the Old West, names such as Colt, Smith & Wesson, Remington and Merwin Hulbert immediately come to mind.

What was that last one? Merwin who?

With few examples surviving to the present day, it is no wonder the last name causes some readers to draw a blank. Yet in the last quarter of the 19th century, that little-known firm produced some of the most innovative revolvers of the day with features that would be welcome on many modern-day handguns.



“Outlaws Jesse James, Bob Dalton and Pearl Hart were known to carry Merwin Hulbert revolvers.”

The double action Merwin Hulbert Pocket Model with hammer positioned in the folded position for pocket carry.

THE DIFFERENCES

So what made Merwins so different from the Colts, Smiths and Remingtons? These were, after all, revolvers that operated on the same principle, and their calibers were often the same, such as 44 WCF (44-40), 38 S&W, 32 S&W (although on the last two, Merwin marked its revolvers as 38 MH and 32 MH for the identical rounds that were made in house) and 22 Short. Its 22 Short Model was an identical copy of S&W's famous Model 1 Tip-up revolver. These guns featured a “Smith & Wesson” stamp as a result of one of the numerous lawsuits brought forth by Rollin White, and that might have had something to do with Merwin using its own name on the other two cartridge types.

The first difference is how Mer-

win Hulbert revolvers open up. A lever beneath the frame is pushed rearward and a similar one on the crane is pulled downward. This releases the top strap and cylinder in a sideways motion. At this point, the cylinder is simply lifted out as it is held in place by vacuum pressure.

Likewise, the tolerances are so tight that on a loaded revolver, only the empty cases will fall free when the revolver is twisted open and the barrel pushed forward, leaving the unfired rounds in the cylinder if the cylinder is not removed. It is believed this was done to alleviate the problems of cases getting stuck as a result of black powder fouling.

When you consider that this was designed early in the last quarter of the 19th century, it is nothing

but a testament to the skills of those machinists and gunsmiths who pulled it off.

A benefit to this type of operation was that the shooter could change barrel lengths without head spacing, timing or cylinder gap issues. A secondary bonus is that the rear of the cylinder is completely covered by a cupped rim on the frame to prevent dirt and debris from entering. This was an important innovation in the early days of loaded ammunition as primer contamination was a concern.

Further innovations on Merwin Hulbert revolvers include the incorporation of folding hammers for pocket carry. The solution by other companies to the problem of a hammer spur snagging on clothing during a draw from concealment was to either bob the hammer or



Not a top-break or a swing out, Merwin Hulbert revolvers twisted to open and only dumped empty cases, leaving loaded ammo in the cylinder.

make it internal. Both methods are still in use today. But Merwin's solution was to have it fold to give the shooter the option of cocking it for a better trigger pull when necessary.

Another feature found on many Merwin Hulbert revolvers is a bird's head style grip frame with a pointed tip that protrudes past the grip panels. These were referred to as skull crushers and aided the user in close quarters battle when he ran out of ammo or could not twist his revolver open in time for a reload.

Their nickel finish was their most attractive option and not only in the looks department. Nickel plating was offered as an extra feature by manufacturers of the day, its primary benefit being the resistance to corrosive priming salts and black powder.

MERWIN HULBERT: A SHORT HISTORY

The story of Merwin Hulbert revolvers began with a New York City-based firearms wholesaler by the name of Joseph Merwin, who had firearms made by other companies stamped with his name and the name of his partner. These were typically small top-break revolvers that were either blued or silver plated. After Bray left the business, Merwin joined another venture with William and Milan Hulbert, who had a 50 percent stake in Hopkins & Allen.

Hopkins & Allen manufactured a variety of firearms, including revolvers. They were not the best handguns in the world, but Merwin was impressed with the quality of their nickel plating and agreed to market the revolver designs that he and the Hulberts' procured under their names as "Merwin, Hulbert and Company."

Even though the handguns were made in the Hopkins & Allen plant, he did not want that company's name to cheapen his new brand. With that kind of foresight, one would expect the venture to prosper—and it did, for a short time. Merwin Hulbert acquired Phoenix Rifles, Evans Rifles and American Cartridge Company.

In the quest to obtain military contracts like its contemporaries at Colt and Smith & Wesson, Merwin Hulbert was left holding the bag for three large arms shipments to Russia. Subsequently, its subsidiary, Evan's Rifle Company, went bankrupt and forced it into more debt. One of the managers at Phoenix literally cleared out the company account and fled the country, leaving Merwin Hulbert literally bankrupt in 1881.

The company bounced back but had not fully recovered by the time of Merwin's death in 1888. The name was changed to "Hulbert Brothers & Company" the following year and after seven years, they threw in the towel and sold their stakes to Hopkins & Allen in 1896. Hopkins & Allen continued to manufacture Merwin Hulbert revolvers until 1916 when they in turn, went bankrupt and their machinery was bought by Marlin Firearms.

Merwin Hulbert sold nickel plated handguns for the same price that their competitors offered base models in blue or case colored.

That extra savings of a few dollars would represent a significant amount in today's rate of exchange.

THE MODELS

Merwin Hulbert's first model was a large frame, open top, single action revolver that shared the same lines as Colt's open-top black powder guns. These were made from 1877 to 1880 and are most often found in 44 WCF or 44 Russian with 7-inch barrels and plow handle grip frames. A 3½-inch version was made with the skull crusher style butt and referred to unofficially as the "Pocket Army."

Their second large-frame incarnation had a top strap and was a double action revolver. These revolvers were the first to incorporate the folding hammer, and a 5-inch barrel was offered in addition to the previous two lengths mentioned for the first model.

My personal Merwin revolvers come from the medium frame lines. The single action version sports a 3½-inch barrel, and its chambering of 38 MH meant it was intended as more of a pocket or hideout gun. The hammers do not

fold on these miniature single-action revolvers, and they could be had with either a square or round butt.

This particular example was acquired from a sporting goods retailer who dismissed it as a Hopkins & Allen model as that is how the revolver is marked. The price was less than \$100 and its value is easily five times that.

My second Merwin is the double action version, and it was marked "Merwin Hulbert & Company," but as the name was not familiar to that seller, he priced it as if he would any other nickel plated revolver from that time period. Times like those make you glad that you performed your research.

These medium-frame revolvers and the small-frame double actions chambered in 32 S&W (which held seven shots) are more commonly found than their big bore counterparts. They can be had for somewhat reasonable prices, but only a few thousand of each type were ever made, so the

EXACT NUMBERS OF GUNS UNKNOWN

Unfortunately there is no reliable information regarding the numbers of Merwin Hulberts that were actually produced. Some historians have tried to make a guess based on surviving examples, but the serial numbers found on most revolvers have more to do with factory control of batches rather than sequential numbering, and multiple revolvers will have the same number as a result.

Merwin Hulbert revolvers turn up all over the world in various degrees of condition from as far away from the American West as the Philippines, South America and Russia. It is speculated that many stateside Merwins were melted down to make metal for the war effort in the 1940s, alongside many other metal goods.

supply is rapidly drying up.

Compared to the Colts, Remingtons and Smith & Wessons of the day, Merwins were probably the strongest made revolvers at the time, and most intact models can be fired with black powder type rounds. Spare parts are impossible to find on these old guns outside of reproduction grips, so keep that in mind should you find a Merwin and wish to shoot it.

Outlaws Jesse James, Bob Dalton and Pearl Hart were known to



Many Merwin Hulbert revolvers were nickel plated. This Pocket Army single-action model in .44-40 was also ornately engraved (Rock Island Auction photo)

carry Merwin Hulbert revolvers. However, they were used by the side of law and order, too, in the hands of Bass Reeves, Pat Garrett and Texas Ranger Frank Hamer, who famously used a 32 Pocket Model in his first shooting. Pat Garrett's ivory handled double action 38 is on display at the Autry National Center in Griffith Park in Los Angeles.

REVIVAL CUT SHORT

In 2010, rumors hit the Internet that a new company had bought all the designs and patents of the Merwin Hulbert models and was going to make them using modern machines and techniques. Collectors flooded this new venture with deposits in 2012 when they were bought out by the Sharps Rifle Company and production seemed on track.

KEY MERWIN HULBERTS FEATURES

- A lever under frame released the top strap and cylinder in a sideways motion
- Tolerances were so tight that only the empty cases fell free when the revolver was twisted open and the barrel pushed forward, leaving the unfired rounds in the cylinder
- Ability to change barrel lengths without head spacing, timing or cylinder gap issues
- Rear of the cylinder was completely covered by a cupped rim on the frame to prevent dirt and debris from entering
- Some had folding hammers for pocket carry
- Bird's head grip frame had "skull crusher" pointed tip that protruded past the grip panels for use as an impact weapon
- Superior nickel finish on revolvers for same price as blued models from other makers

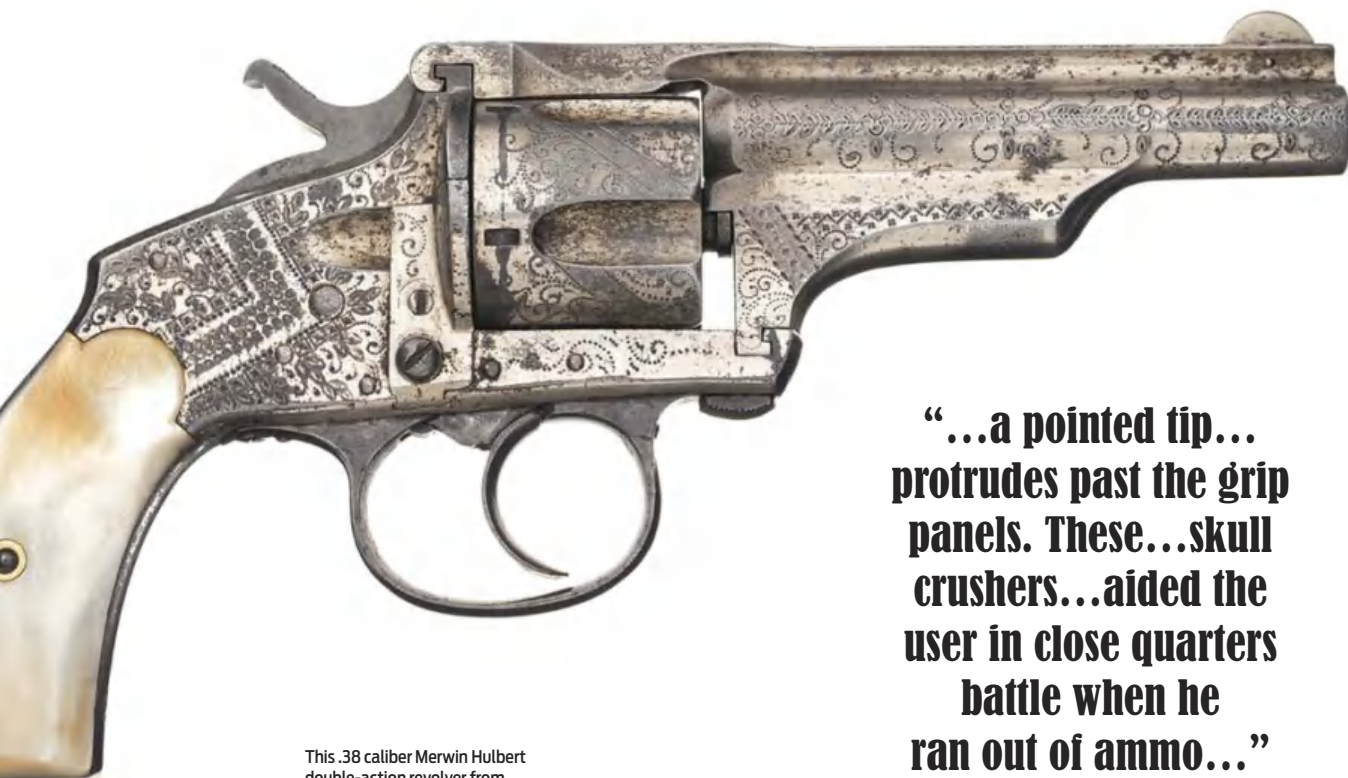
Alas, this excitement would be short-lived as the new company faced the same fate of its previous incarnations. Production problems, tooling issues and trying to replicate the old time styling on modern machinery plagued the new start-up.

Eventually Sharps' parent company, Broadsword Group, announced that it had no interest in resurrecting these old revolvers and would promptly refund all deposits that were re-

ceived and killed the project.

There have been further rumors that at least one firearms importer might have these revolvers manufactured overseas in the upcoming decades, but to date it is still just a rumor. Until that comes to fruition, the collectors, re-enactors and shooters who want a Merwin Hulbert revolver will have to make do with the few that are out there that left the factory more than 100 years ago.

GNSL



This .38 caliber Merwin Hulbert double-action revolver from the 1880s sold at auction recently for \$2,587.50. (Rock Island Auction photo)

“...a pointed tip... protrudes past the grip panels. These...skull crushers...aided the user in close quarters battle when he ran out of ammo...”

Performance Art

**THE BEAUTIFUL NAVY ARMS RENDITION
OF "THE GUN THAT WON THE WEST"
IS ALSO A GREAT SHOOTER**





TEXT AND PHOTOS BY STEVEN BARLOW

"It's beautiful."

That was the consensus of everyone I allowed to handle the rifle before I quickly and carefully took it back. I didn't want to scratch it.

The rifle, marketed by Navy Arms, started its existence as a newly produced Winchester 1873 in .45 Colt, actually made by Miroku Firearms, which was then treated to a Turnbull color case hardened finish.

PHOTO CREDIT: STEVEN PAUL BARLOW



This Navy Arms 1873, except for its .45 Colt chambering, is a faithful reproduction of the Winchester 1873, known as "The Gun That Won the West." (Navy Arms photo)

"To be able to daydream about how this gun was used in the Old West is just a bonus."

When the Winchester 1873 was first introduced, it was a milestone in reliability and durability for repeating firearms. It would have been a treasured possession by anyone in the Old West who owned one, more for its ability to take down game, enforce the law and defend the homestead than for the way it looked.

The fact that I was nervous about marring the finish or scratching the stock was because this rifle was a loaner from Navy Arms and I was responsible for it. I shouldn't have been so tentative, so protective of it at first. After all, this wasn't an original, collectible 1873 worth thousands. It was a beautiful rifle, yes, but it was a beautiful rifle that was meant to be used. It was meant to be fired.

"It's beautiful," was my exact thought when I did fire it for the first time. The gun shoots like a dream. It comes to the shoulder effortlessly and points naturally. Because it fires a pistol cartridge, it



Loading .45 Colt rounds into the tube magazine through this loading gate in the receiver was easily accomplished without it nipping at your thumb. (Author photo)

has very mild recoil, which makes shooting it a very pleasant experience.

Of course, all of those things helped to make it an instant success among those straight-shooting, plain-talking settlers in the Old West. They were knowledgeable

and experienced with firearms, and they recognized a good thing when they saw it.

BACK IN 1873

When the Winchester 1873 was introduced, one of the biggest improvements was the cartridge it



fired: the .44 WCF, which, later on, was more popularly called the .44-40. The company's earlier Henry and Winchester 1866 models fired the .44 Henry Rimfire cartridge that wasn't as powerful or as reliable. The .44-40 was a more reliable centerfire design that pushed a 200-grain bullet to about 1,250 feet per second.

The rifle/cartridge combination caught on quickly, and soon Colt, Smith & Wesson, Remington and others were chambering their revolvers to fire this cartridge. This only added to the 1873 rifle's popularity, as those who carried firearms could carry rifles and pistols that fired the same ammo. The 1873 was also chambered in .32-20 and .38-40. Pistols were made for these cartridges as well.

With the 1873 established, Winchester turned its attention to rifles firing longer, more powerful cartridges that had previously been the domain of single shot ri-

AMMO AND ACCURACY

The Navy Arms Model 1873 I tested was chambered for .45 Colt, sometimes referred to as the .45 Long Colt to differentiate it from other of .45 cartridges.

Original 1873 rifles were never chambered in it. Some say the original rim of the .45 Colt was too small to allow it to function reliably in the rifles. Others say it was because Colt didn't want other companies to chamber guns for their cartridge. Whatever the reason, from a marketing standpoint, it's probably better that this new 1873 rifle uses the more widely available .45 Colt rather than the original .44-40.

For this review I used Winchester 255-grain LRN, Magtech 250-grain LFN, American Eagle 225-grain JSP and Federal 225-grain SWC HP.

All of these are relatively light loads. The American Eagle clocked at about 1,200 fps according to my Magneto Speed chronograph, about 200 fps faster than from my Ruger Vaquero handgun. Cowboy action shooters don't care about velocity, and a heavy bullet traveling at modest velocities is plenty for deer-sized game at 100 yards.

Though this wasn't designed as a precision rifle, accuracy was very good. Using the iron sights exclusively, groups at 50 yards hovered around 1½ inches. Shooting off-hand at ranges out to 50 yards, most holes in the targets could be covered by your fist. I had no problems hitting a 10-inch steel plate at 100 yards.

fles. They produced the heavier-framed Models 1876 (.45-75, .50-95 Express and others) and 1886 (.45-70, .50-110 and others) for big game hunting.

But the handier 1873, with its moderate cartridges, continued to be popular. To this day, it is referred to as "the gun that won the West." Later, Winchester introduced the stronger, John Browning-designed Model 1892, which fired the same short cartridges, and the Model

1894 that fired the smokeless .30-30 cartridge. These two rifles eventually eclipsed the 1873 in popularity.

In all, Winchester manufactured more than 720,000 of their 1873 rifles between 1873 and 1919.

1873 FEATURES

The Navy Arms rendering of this famous gun is offered with a full octagon barrel in lengths of 20 or 24¼ inches. The stock is



The Navy Arms 1873 started its existence as an unfinished Winchester 1873 made by Miroku Firearms Manufacturing Co. (Navy Arms photo)



Mark Bender, a colleague from the author's law enforcement days, had little experience with Old West weapons, but found that shooting mild pistol cartridges from a carbine was an enjoyable experience. (Author photo)

straight—no pistol grip—and is of deluxe grade, fully checkered American walnut. It has a full-length magazine tube with a 10-round capacity. It is available chambered in either .45 Colt or .357 Magnum.

Winchester's short-throw lever requires very little motion to chamber and eject the short pistol cartridges. Just as with the originals, there is a lever lock that can be twisted to lock the lever in place—great when you're bouncing along with it at a full gallop through brush.

The front sight is a brass bead. The rear is a semi-buckhorn that is adjustable for elevation and drift adjustable for windage. A dust cover slides over ejection port on the top of the receiver to keep debris out of the action. It moves out of the way automatically when the lever is worked.

There is a half-cock notch for the hammer, which is where it

should be when the rifle is carried in the field. There is no other manual safety. The metal butt plate is a slightly curved shotgun-style design that I find more comfortable than the crescent butt plates on many rifles of this era.

AT THE RANGE

The rifle I tested had the shorter, carbine-length 20-inch barrel. Its fast-handling qualities that helped to make it popular in the Old West were immediately evident. It was quick to transition from target to target, which would have helped the cowboy fending off a band of rustlers or the outnumbered lawman tracking a gang of outlaws. Those things go through your mind when you shoot a gun like this.

There was considerable take-up on the trigger, but then it broke cleanly with a respectable 4½-pound pull. I shot a couple of .45 Colt cowboy loads, one brand of

“The gun shoots like a dream. It comes to the shoulder effortlessly and points naturally... it has very mild recoil, which makes shooting it...very pleasant...”

jacketed softpoints and one brand of lead hollowpoints through the rifle and had no malfunctions after several hundred rounds fired. That would have been reassuring to any adventurer in the Old West whose life might have depended on his rifle's reliability.

The action on this Navy Arms gun was smooth; there were no rough spots whatsoever. Keep in mind, though, that lever action ri-

SPECIFICATIONS

Name: NAVY ARMS 1873

Base rifle: Current production 1873 rifle made by Miroku for Winchester

Calibers: .45 Colt, .357 Magnum

Finish: Turnbull color case hardened receiver

Barrel: Full octagon, 20- or 24½- inches

Capacity: 10 in full-length tube magazine

Sights: Marbles semi-buckhorn rear, gold bead front

Stock: Deluxe American walnut with full checkering and Winchester Red finish, steel shotgun-style butt plate

Other: Winchester short-stroke kit pre-installed

MSRP: \$2,500



A close look at the Navy Arms 1873 receiver shows the quality of the gun's Turnbull color case hardening treatment. (Navy Arms photo)

fls, like pump action shotguns, work best when you don't baby the actions. Work the lever completely with authority and you will have no problems.

I spent little time at the bench with this rifle, just enough to get some chronograph readings and to see how the sights were regulated. Accuracy was good, certainly good enough for whatever use you make of this rifle within the limitations of its pistol cartridge.

A GUN FOR ALL SEASONS

I understand how this Navy Arms Model 1873 would be attractive to those involved in SASS cowboy action shooting events. Those shooters, in their reproduction Sunday-go-to-meeting best, would feel proud to be carrying this rifle into competition.

But I don't see this as a weekend-only rifle. I see it also as a perfect moderate-range hunting rifle to be carried by those who have reached a stage where they have earned a right to some of the finer things in life. To be able to daydream about how this gun was used in the Old West is just a bonus.

I would like to take this into the woods this fall. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, it's true. And I'd like to be holding this beauty and use it for its originally designed purpose: to shoot it. And that would be a beautiful thing.

GNSL

SOURCES

Navy Arms
www.navyarms.com

OLD WESTERN SCROUNGER
www.ows-ammo.com

AVAILABILITY

Navy Arms sells their firearms through distributors exclusively. Your firearms dealer can track down one of these 1873 rifles through the following distributors:
Ellett Brothers: 800-845-3711
Lipseys: 225-755-1333
Jerry's Sports Center: 800-234-2612
Zanders: 800-851-4373

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**THROUGHOUT THE YEARS, THE
HOLSTER EVOLVED TO MEET
THE COWBOY'S NEEDS**



James Barnard is a leading making of authentic Western gear. This Fort Worth holster is an excellent example of his work. (gunfighter.com.)

anion

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BOB CAMPBELL

It was a tough job. The days were long, and the work was hard, which is exactly why the cowboy understood the need for good gear.

Take the handgun, one of his constant companions. While he knew a rifle might snag brush or get caught in the reins, a pistol was handy in a number of ways, including for directing cattle with a shot across the front of the steer, close to the nose.





The RIP Ford holster from .45Maker.com is a great holster, historically correct and well made of the best material.

His hat and boots needed to provide lots of mileage in different conditions. As a result, they cost plenty, sometimes as much as a month's pay. And then there's the saddle. He may have ridden the boss's horse, but the saddle was personal property that might last 20 years if properly maintained. Besides, when in the saddle from sunrise to sunset, a good saddle was mandatory.

Therefore, it was only natural that the cowboys turned to trusted saddle makers for their holsters. In the following story, track the journey of the holster.

WRONG SIDE HOLSTERS

Bat Masterson preferred the cross draw. The holsters of the day were a fine mix of leather. Some were molded tightly to the handgun, some were quite loose, some exposed the muzzle or trigger guard and others did not.

Most holsters featured situational carry. When the cowboy was dismounted he could wear the holster behind the hip or forward of the hip when that was more comfortable. Research into period images indicates about 40 to 50 percent carried the holster cross draw to get out of the way of the rope.

This may have been the birth of the cross draw in common use. A long barrel revolver was easier to draw cross draw and overall the cross draw offered many advantages.

Bat Masterson wrote that he carried his Colt cross draw because he had seen lawmen disarmed by thugs approaching from the back and taking their revolvers.

He felt that he could protect the handgun better carried cross draw when working rough saloons. Wild Bill Hickok was often seated when playing cards and knew that he could draw the pistols from the familiar cross draw position easily when seated.

EARLY HOLSTERS

Prior to the Civil War, most handguns were carried in pommel or saddle holsters or stuck into a

tightly woven sash. During the war, the cavalry flap holster was used to protect the powder charge and caps of percussion revolvers. These holsters were designed for a



During the 1920s and 1930s, many lawmen still carried their handguns in something like the Jeffrey Custom Leather Lawman, right. The spring loaded G Man, left, was just coming into its own.

“A constant companion to the cowboy was his pistol...”

reverse draw. Simply cutting the flap off allowed a faster draw, but the pistol rode deep enough in the holster that retention was still good.

Among the first Western-style holsters specifically designed for civilians was the Slim Jim holster. Worn on the strong side, the Slim Jim was often made of finer leather and given some form of embellishment. The art of holster making was born with these holsters. The leather was

laid out in a pattern and folded back to form the holster. The holster was stitched together after holes were driven or punched in the leather.

Many had open bottoms, but most had some type of plug in the base of the holster to keep dirt, sand or brush out of the muzzle.

Another holster variant was the half flap holster. The half flap holster doesn't cover as much of the gun's butt and allows the hand to get a grip on the gun butt, but the cylinder was protected.

As time passed holsters were cut low in the holster mouth to allow a more rapid grasp of the handle of the handgun. These holsters were sometimes called the Half Breed. Other holsters were

THE REAL DEAL- THE MEXICAN LOOP

As specific Western patterns emerged, the most popular were those designed with a loop for attachment to the belt. The holster body doubles over the rear of the holster and a loop attaches the rear or skirt and the front of the holster.

The Mexican Loop was rugged and the gun is held high on the belt, out of the way of roping. The three part roping motion a cowboy practiced could easily foul on his holster, but the high riding belt holster was out of the way.

The Mexican Loop was a popular holster. In contrast, the low-slung gun-fighter's holster isn't historically accurate, but it is a popular notion that dies hard. The Hollywood holster was an impossible holster to use well off horseback but one that cowboy shows popularized.

developed during the late Western era to allow better comfort and access from either a suit coat or when riding in a vehicle.



The maker at Western Star has crafted an excellent Slim Jim style for the Colt SAA. Note attention to detail.



The Tom Threepersons holster is perhaps the most practical of all late Western era holsters. This one's from Lobo Gunleather.

“A good holster was essential... It was only natural that the cowboy turned to trusted saddle makers for his holster.”

THREEPERSONS HOLSTER

The popular Mexican Loop holster was made by folding back the leather on the rear of the holster to form a large loop so it could be worn on the belt.

About 1920, one of the best holsters was designed by Tom Threepersons. He cut everything not needed away from the Mexican loop holster and had a stan-

dard belt loop sewn into the holster. It featured an economy of leather and offered a fast draw as the trigger guard and most of the rear of the gun was exposed.

Threepersons' designs were workmanlike holsters and among the first on the road to a true service-type holster. The Threepersons holster was often worn under a draping garment. The strong suit of this holster was comfort and a fast draw. The need to keep the handgun stable while riding a horse was no longer as important, and neither was the Threepersons necessarily worn on a heavy gun belt. The draw was higher and more suited to riding in a vehicle.

HOLSTERS CHANGE WITH THE TIMES

As men rode less on the trail and more in vehicles, the need to completely shield the handgun in leather came to an end. The Mexican Loop holster was far from dead, however, and survived for many years. The loop became tighter and the holster rode higher. It was made for modern double action revolvers and even the Colt 1911 automatic.

Today we are blessed with some of the finest leather makers ever to stitch a scabbard. Some pride themselves on authentic Western gear and others have made good improvements on the theme.

The Diamond Loop Cattle-brand holster (Rocking K Saddlery) is as good as it gets in a cowboy holster and an authentic working rig with a lexicon of brands every respectable cowboy kept in his notebook. The better-educated

THE COWBOY LIFE

In geography books well into the 20th century, the Great American Desert was labeled west of the 98th Meridian, where the line bisected Kansas, and out to the Sierras.

By 1880, there were still few towns with a population of 5,000 or more. The primary story told of these times is the story of the cowboy, although he preferred to be called a drover or cattle hand.

The stories told are sometimes correct in detail but not in the dramatic grinding reality of the day. The cowboy led a carefree life free from ties of society that tended to bind, but other times he had little choice but to play out a bad hand.

Most were young and struggled between Victorian social ideas and the hard-fisted reality of the frontier. The cowboy was in the saddle because of big business, the biggest business of the West, and that was cattle ranching and herding.

He herded cattle, mended fences and rescued strays in all types of weather. Rustlers and Indians were a concern. Among the cowboys were princes of men as well as thugs. After years in the saddle, the cowboy was marked by a bowlegged walk to the point city folks thought he was lame. Some of the great men of the era such as Bat Masterson and Bill Hickok lived a life in town due to injuries that prevented riding a horse comfortably.

drovers, able to cipher, write well and do payroll, made a good living.

The holster illustrated from .45 Maker.com is a good example of the modern cowboy holster. The Duelist should last a lifetime. Trail-rider Products (gunfighter.com) offers an authentic Fort Worth holster that is well finished and authentic.

The Jeffrey Custom Leather Westerner is a wonderful blend of authentic Western style and tooling in a crossdraw holster. I often carry my favorite all-around SAA .45 in this holster. It is among my top holsters of all time for all-around packing a heavy revolver.

The D. M. Bullard crossdraw features a Mexican Loop look, however, note the holster is double stitched in a modern fashion. With all due respect to 19th century makers, few if any were as well made and durable as this holster. I cannot imagine a superior choice for Cowboy Action Shooting.

Moving toward the late Western era, the Wild Bunch type holster from Rocking K Saddlery carries the Cimarron 1911. The Lobo Gunleather Threepersons is a tribute to a legendary lawman that walked the mean streets so El

Paso and served as a Federal Agent during tumultuous times while wearing the Colt .45 SAA.

Worn slightly behind the hip, this is a very fast holster. The well-designed leather thong, properly understood, keeps the handgun secure.

INTEGRAL PART OF HISTORY

These rigs are an important part of western history, reflecting the needs and vanities of the cowboy. And they had to. After all, some days on the range reached 16 hours. **GNSL**

HOLSTER SOURCES

Ted Blocker:

www.tedblockerholsters.com

Vintage Gun Leather:

www.vintagegunleather.com

.45 Maker:

www.45maker.com

Rocking K Saddlery:

www.rockingsaddlery.com

D.M. Bullard:

www.dmbullardleather.com

Jeffrey Custom Leather:

www.jeffreycustomleather.com

Lobo Gun Leather:

www.lobogunleather.com

Old West Reproductions:

www.oldwestreproductions.com

Western Star:

www.westernstarleather.com

Gunfighter.com:

www.gunfighter.com

Chisholm's Trail Old West Leather:

www.westernleatherholster.com



Little Big “MAN”

**THE DIMINUTIVE .32-20,
THE OVERACHIEVER
IN THE OLD WEST**

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY BOB CAMPBELL

It's natural that when folks think of the great guns of the gunfighters and the Old West, they think of the .44-40 rifle and the .45 Colt revolver. Most believe that some combination of big bruiser calibers was carried.

But many of the firearms of the Old West were inexpensive small caliber firearms. Most of the settlers were on a tight budget and there were many more inexpensive firearms than Colts or Winchesters.



These are each good revolvers but .45-frame .32-20s, top, are stronger than the .38 frame guns, bottom.

“...over the years the .32-20 has done the work of a larger cartridge.”

In 1882, however, Winchester introduced the .32-20 Winchester Centerfire Cartridge. This offering combined accuracy and economy with the Winchester lever action rifle, and this overachiever performed back in the day.

MODERATE BALLISTICS

Standard ballistics consisted of a 115-grain flat point bullet at 1,200 fps. While we consider the .32-20 light for deer-sized cartridges, over the years the .32-20 has done the work of a larger cartridge. But it is at its best for small game and predators such as coyote.

I have fired a number of these

rifles and find them as accurate as the other WCF calibers, but with less recoil than the .38-40 or the .44-40. A modern shooter using hard cast bullets may find the WCF calibers less accurate than the legend.

In the early days, firearms sometimes had less consistent bore diameter from maker to maker and handgun to rifle. This greater disparity in bore dimensions makes for poor accuracy. Rifles were more likely to be “off specification” than handguns. This ensured feed reliability even with a dirty or corroded chamber and the less-than-perfect ammunition of the period.

A FEW THOUGHTS ON THE .32-20

Among the most respected man-stoppers in the West was the .44 Colt Army. The Colt Army sent a 129-grain round ball to 900 fps for 231 foot pounds of energy.

The Winchester .32-20 rifle, with a 115-grain bullet at 1,200 fps, developed 367 foot pounds. I lean toward measuring actual damage more than energy but, just the same, this is interesting.

It's interesting enough perhaps that long after the Western Era, both Colt and Smith & Wesson offered double action revolvers chambered for the .32-20 WCF. Those .38 frame guns were not as strong as the earlier .45 frame .32-20 revolvers, but they are good, accurate revolvers that ride light on the hip.

But the bullets were soft and easily bumped into the grooves on firing. These bullets were usually 40 parts lead and one part tin.

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When you consider the supplies that had to be purchased to start a homestead from scratch, an inexpensive cartridge had advantages.

Harder alloys are popular today to produce fine accuracy in some firearms and also to limit leading of the barrel. With the proper bullets, the WCF cartridges are accurate. The .32-20 proved popular and economical and is still useful today.

PERFORMANCE IS RELATIVE

The .32-20 WCF's 1,200 fps may seem modest for a rifle and likely to include a parabolic trajectory, but the shooter who knew what he was doing and was familiar with his rifle could connect on deer-sized targets well past 100 yards.

If need be, man-sized targets could be engaged at 200 yards. The .32-20 compared well to standard calibers such as the .44 Rimfire. The new caliber served cattle drivers and farmers well.

The men of the day were fa-

WESTERNERS COULDN'T ALWAYS GET THE BEST

In the Old West, not everyone owned a Colt or a Winchester. Often, settlers had to use the firearms that were available. The various short .38 calibers and surplus military rifles were common.

The Old West wasn't able to support manufacture and did not have facilities capable of supplying finished products. Rather, raw materials were harvested. Good guns were sometimes hard to come by. When you did find a quality firearm, limited funds, limited space and other needs were balanced against the need for a capable firearm. Folks in need and on the spear point of the West often had to compromise and later upgrade their guns and accoutrements when they could.

Then there were the inevitable supply issues. When you look at the guns used, the social classes of miner, farmer, merchant and lawman also played a big part in firearms selection.

In the East, the hunting rifle had been used on hunting trips and was hung over the mantle at night. The Western rifle had to be ready to engage a threat at a moment's notice. The threat might be a wolf or an attacking Comanche. The Winchester rifle was the firearm that most of the men in the West wanted, but many had to settle for less.

miliar with their rifles and were possibly better shots than average. The .32-20 was chambered in the Winchester 1873 lever action rifle. Numerous single shot rifles were also chambered for this cartridge and so was the Colt Single Action Army revolver.

A friend of mine reported examining a Colt SAA with 7.5-inch barrel in a museum. Confiscated from a dead bad man by a Western marshal, the .32-20 Colt had six

notches in the handle—not something done lightly or with a false boasting in those days.

In more recent times, noted writer Frank Barnes took deer cleanly with the .32-20 some 75 years ago at a time when “nothing else was available.” When hand-loaded for performance, the .32-20 will more or less equal the .30 carbine.

There is speculation the .30 carbine was modeled on the .32-

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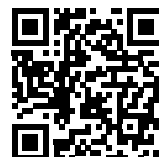


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20, which is an interesting step in evolution from a light handy saddle carbine to the light handy self-loading carbine.

There is another side to the coin, as well, with this caliber. A lieutenant of Mexican rebel leader Pancho Villa was nearly killed during the Mexican Revolution after he emptied his .32-20 revolver into an adversary without the desired effect. Villa took the man's Colt and replaced it with another SAA in .45. The Mexican Revolution kept the Colt SAA and Winchester '92 in production 20 years past their prime.

FOR RIFLES AND PISTOLS

All of the short WCF car-

tridges were introduced as rifle cartridges first and then adopted by the handgun makers. Each features a short, semi-bottleneck in the cartridge case for proper feeding. These cartridges translated well to handguns.

The effect of the cartridge from the rifle, based on superior accuracy, penetration and velocity, was much better. Much the same relationship exists today with cartridges such as the .22 LR and 9 mm Luger that are chambered in both the rifle and the handgun.

The original load produced about 900 fps from a 7.5 inch barrel Colt revolver. Modern cowboy action loads such as

“Confiscated from a dead bad man by a Western marshal, the .32-20 Colt had six notches in the handle...”

the excellent offering from Black Hills are loaded to about 800 fps from the revolver. This load, using a 115-grain bullet, averages 1,083 fps from the rifle. Remington 100-grain loads average 1,213 fps from the rifle and 750 fps from the pistol. I've found the Black Hills load to be more accurate.



There is nothing quite like a well-balanced Winchester for small game hunting.

The loads are light in deference to many well-worn quality handguns and the many Spanish copies of American revolvers such as the Brothers Hermanos guns that were none too tight when new.

PAIRING UP

The commonality of cartridges between the handgun and the rifle was a boon in the West. I am certain the rifle was the most important of the pair. The .32-20 allowed more cartridges to be carried per a given weight. Compared to the .44-40 with its 200-grain bullet over 40 grains of powder, the .32-20 was less expensive and lighter to carry in quantity.

If a rifle was lost or damaged,

SMALL BORES SOMETIMES NETTED BIG RESULTS

Many of the settlers of the West were not that far removed from the pioneers that settled Tennessee and Kentucky.

The Kentucky rifle was not always a big bore. Some were supplied in modest calibers. The small caliber and light weight was an advantage in long forays into the wilderness. More balls could be carried for the smaller calibers and powder lasted longer.

The caliber was adequate for turkey. Larger game could be stalked to 50 yards or closer in less hunted areas. Deer fell to a through and through wound in the lungs with a 115-grain bullet. These men took game that modern shooters would feel outclassed the caliber. This is a characteristically urban outlook.

To herd cattle, drive off coyote or against mountain lions, the .32-20 has much merit. The cartridge is easy to load and easy to use well.

the handgun could serve as a backup. Another advantage was that, due to the thicker cylinder walls of the .32-20, the lighter caliber handgun weighed more than the .44-40 and .45, resulting in even lighter recoil and excellent balance.

SHOOTING THE .32-20

The firearms illustrated are good examples of Old West firearms. The stag gripped First Generation Colt is in excellent condition. The well-worn Winchester 1892 has a good bore and has proven reliable.

With the Black Hills cowboy loading, each has proven accurate and reliable, demonstrating a clean powder burn as well. This is no mean feat when you consider the voluminous cartridge case was intended to burn black powder.

To get a good idea of the capabilities of the .32-20 WCF, I obtained a set of loading dies and a supply of Missouri Bullet Company's 120-grain flat point bullets, sized .313 inch.

Interestingly, the balance was noticeably different with my Model 1892 rifle when fully loaded with 13 .32-20 cartridges—quite an ammunition reserve that makes the octagon barrel rifle muzzle heavy.

The previous owner had set

the sights for 100 yards. I was able to move them to the lowest notch and sight the rifle in for 25 yards. With a modest amount of load development, I was able to demonstrate 900 fps from the revolver and 1,200 fps from the rifle.

Each was accurate, with the Colt posting 2½- to 3-inch groups with the hand loads at 25 yards and the Winchester 2- to 2½-inches at 50 yards. I doubt there is a bison in my future, but there are plenty of coyote and dirt clods and pinecone to feel the wrath of the .32-20.

A TRUE PERFORMER

Though I have personally carried the most effective handguns and rifles possible during my life, I find that the .32-20 has many good points. It is among the best recreational cartridges of the Old West period, and it's inexpensive to load. This cartridge is the Little Big Man of the West in lever action rifles and single action revolvers. **GNSL**

2 Quick Facts

1 In testing, the author found the .32-20 as accurate as other WCF cartridges.

2 Plus, he said they had less recoil than the .38-40 or the .44-40.

PARTING SHOT



PHOTO CREDIT WILD HORIZONS/ UIG VIA GETTY IMAGES

Old West, BROOKLYN Style

These scenes were created by Brooklyn-born painter Stanley Borack (1927-1993). Borack was a prolific artist best known for his dramatic covers of Western pulp novels and magazines and his fine art paintings of Western life, despite the fact that he lived in New York City most of his life.





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